

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL TO EMPOWER
AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE SEMINARY STUDENTS
FOR MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

A LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL TO EMPOWER AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE SEMINARY STUDENTS FOR MINISTRY IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

by

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This project addressed the problem of African American female seminary students at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia who graduate but do not pursue professional leadership ministry opportunities within the local church. The researcher hypothesized that based on the transformational leadership model seminary students would take advantage of a leadership program provided which will substantially increase their self-efficacy. The researcher utilized the qualitative research method along with surveys, focus groups and interviews offered to female students. At the conclusion of the project, there was a leadership development module created for future implementation.

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INTRODUCTION

The number of women entering into seminary education continues to increase each year across the country. As women continue to make strides in pursuing graduate level degrees, unfortunately, access to professional opportunities within the local church continue to be limited. This project addresses this problem and offers a leadership development model that will provide additional tools for female seminary students. In Chapter One of this work, I (referred to as the *researcher* in this work) outline my spiritual journey and the context for my project. I provide information about my journey in ministry development – from being licensed in my home church in Upper Marlboro, Maryland to my current ministry work in Richmond, Virginia. Throughout this project, I share information regarding the challenges and triumphs of being a female in ministry. Each step in my professional and journey provided necessary lessons for the leader that God was preparing me to become and laying the groundwork for this project. In Chapter One, I describe how mentors and specific pastors played vital roles in my development as a leader. It is through the guiding hand of my early mentors that assisted me in finding the courage to step out and begin to find my voice as a minister of God. During the early development years of ministry, I had the privilege of being exposed to several, powerful female ministry voices that provided example for me when I was seeking to understand my role in predominantly male profession/calling. The examples and opportunities that were provided for me early in my journey assisted in my early definition of voice and calling. Unfortunately, the positive forces that were experienced early almost became overshadowed by the challenges of ministry later in life. Within Chapter One, I also offer detailed

information on how some of the difficulties of ministry threatened to silence my voice, as I struggled to continue in full time ministry within the local church. The difficulties included having to deal with the challenges of sexism and ageism; working under challenging leadership; and attempting to balance family and ministry. Within this chapter, I communicate information about my previous context of ministry, Imani Community Church. When the research project began, I was the Senior Pastor of this ministry. Due to unforeseen personal challenges, I ended up leaving this context. This chapter provides information about my subsequent return to Richmond, Virginia, as well as the new context of the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. Because of my experiences, the research efforts focus on leadership development of female clergy for work in the local church.

In Chapter Two of this project, I examined the current literature available on leadership development for African American female clergy, where I explore several current leadership model and scholarly works that focus specifically on women. I soon discovered there was a missing voice concerning female leadership within the local church. There was literature that gave practical information and advice on leadership development. Additionally, there were a few books written from an academic perspective. Also, there were books written from an Eurocentric perspective concerning the challenges of female leadership within the local church. However, there was not a plethora of literature to explore specifically speaking to women leaders within the African American local church. Within Chapter Two, I examine the literary works of authors such as Dr. Vashti McKenzie, Dr. Teresa Fry Brown, Dr. Delores Carpenter, Dr. Cheryl Gilkes Townsend, bell hooks, and Dr. Joy McDougall. All of these pioneering women contribute to the critical study of leadership development for women.

In Chapter Three, I provide theoretical, historical, theological, and biblical foundations for my ministry focus. The theoretical foundation includes the authentic leadership theory, the

transformational leadership theory, gender roles/gender socialization, and the principle of self-efficacy. In addition, I focus on the principles of Womanist theology and the important role that the understanding of God plays in the development of female clergy leaders. I briefly examine the limitations of Black Theology and Feminist Theology in regards to understanding the unique challenge of African American women leaders. Black Theology provides the necessary foundation when dealing of matters of race and Feminist Theology address issues pertaining to gender. However, Womanist theology provides a great marrying of the two theological schools of thoughts while at the same time being sensitive to the unique history and make up of the African American female. I also discuss the concept of Afrocentric religion and how it provides additional theoretical foundation to this research. This focus also leads me to offer a historical examination of the role that women have played in leadership within the church from Kemet to the post-Civil Rights' era.

The Old Testament biblical foundation emerged from the story of Ruth and Naomi. Within this biblical text, we find a narrative centered around a mentoring relationship between two women. Through this relationship, the younger of the two women was able to draw from the experience and wisdom of the older woman and grow spiritually. Naomi provided a living example for Ruth that she could model and strive for and through their relationship and bond, Ruth was able to experience growth and discover destiny. The New Testament foundation originated from the story of Mary and Elizabeth. Within this narrative, a relationship between two women was presented. The relationship between Mary and Elizabeth was one based on trust and respect. Because of the support given by Elizabeth, Mary was able to embrace what God was doing in and through her. Within both of these biblical stories, women leaders were developed through a spiritual mentoring relationship with other women.

In Chapter Four, I identify the methodology that I utilized for the implementation and assessment of the doctoral project. This is my hypothesis, which is based on the transformational leadership theory: female seminarians would take advantage of a leadership development program that would increase their feelings of self-efficacy. In order to create this leadership development program, I collected data by conducting interviews with current female leaders in the local church, listening to focus groups with current seminary students, and surveying seminary alumni.

Chapter Five contains my field experience and data- information collected during the program's implementation. By using this evidence, I was able to identify common themes that were apparent within the collected data. Based on this information, I developed a leadership development module to implement during the seminary's academic year. Therefore, this chapter includes an overview of the entire process, including an outline of the modules that I created by using the collected data.

Chapter Six presents my reflections, challenges, and next steps of my doctoral project. Essentially, I identify the difficulties and benefits of changing contexts at the beginning of the implementation process. Finally, I shared information about the next steps of my doctoral project and strategies for any future implementation.

CHAPTER 1

MINISTRY FOCUS

When the researcher was eight years old, she remembers attending church with her paternal grandmother. At this point of her life, her parents did not attend church on a regular basis. The only times that she did go to church was with her neighbors or with her grandmother. On one particular Sunday, she attended Antioch Baptist Church, a relatively young church at the time, which held worship service in the gym of a local high school. During that worship service, the researcher recalls being completely captivated by the beautiful music. She vividly remembers feeling consumed by the energy flowing in the room. Her grandmother, on this Sunday, was so moved by the joyful music and service that she was began to weep uncontrollably. The researcher's mother gently leaned over to the eight-year old to reassure her that her grandmother was okay and to have no fear. However, her mother had misread her expressions and her response; although she had no knowledge of scripture, she was not afraid. She did not know the words to the songs, or when to sit or stand during worship, but she fully recognized the feeling and power that caused her grandmother to cry.

After that encounter with God, the researcher began to creatively search for opportunities to go to church. She found a way, when she went to church with her neighbors, to get parts in Christmas and Easter programs or Easter. Although she could not persuade her parents to take her to church

every Sunday, she always discovered ways to stay connected to a church throughout her childhood years. For example, when she attended junior high school, God used an angel to extend an invitation to church that would alter the course of her life. One of her close friends, Tiffany

Franklin, asked the researcher to come and hear her church's youth choir sing that Sunday. Amazingly, Tiffany attended Antioch Baptist Church – the same church the researcher's grandmother took her when she was younger. The researcher was excited about the chance to go to church, so she eagerly accepted the invitation and decided to involve the rest of her family. She convinced her older brother to attend, while also swaying her dad to drop them off since the church was located near their home. When they entered the church, the youth choir was standing up and singing a song that still resonates in her spirit today– "...the storm is passing over...Hallelujah." During this particular season of the researcher's life, she had already endured many turbulent storms at home. Her older brother was caught up in the drug game; and his dangerous lifestyle led to many sleepless nights for her family as they wondered if they would receive a phone call from the police, hospital, or morgue. The drug war, during this period, was violently surging in the District of Columbia; then, it began to spill over into the streets of the neighboring counties. The senseless and horrific violence that emerged from this drug war claimed the lives of many youth, including several of the researcher's friends. Her brother, like many youth, was attracted to the allure of the ritzy lifestyle and easy money that the drug world flaunted. Her brother's behaviors and choices soon began to pile more stress on an already strained marriage between her parents. The presence of this tension and hostility in her home compelled her to search for peace. She found the serenity that she so desperately needed as she sat and listened to the choir sing on that Sunday morning. On that day, she recalls that she was determined to get to know the God that the choir sang so passionately about every time she went to church. Over time, she finally convinced her parents to take her to church every Sunday and to Bible

Study/choir rehearsal every Wednesday night. After several months, her mother and father decided to attend Antioch with their daughter. Later that year, the entire family was baptized together.

Participating in the youth ministry of Antioch Baptist Church during those years provided a strong foundation for the researcher's spirituality: In Bible Study, her hunger to understand the Word of God began. In the youth choir, her recognition of God and true worship started to develop. Then, during an annual oratorical contest, she learned to appreciate the power of her voice and her words. The researcher's youth pastor provided guidance, as well as unconditional love and support for her and her older brother. Her senior pastor offered an example of true integrity and spiritual leadership. While there was little peace to be found in her home, she was blessed with a second family in her church home. Despite the constant fighting that kept her awake many nights at her home, she found rest and peace in her newfound love for Christ. In order to escape the chaos and pain of a family that she exhausted herself defending, helping, and praying for, the researcher immersed herself in understanding more about God, someone who loves unconditionally. She was her mother's defender; her father's light; her brother's ally – a person forced to carry adult-sized burdens and weight that would have consumed and destroyed her had it not been for God. She found refuge, love, and peace in the voice of God.

As a teenager in Prince George's County, Maryland, the researcher not only spent many days with her youth ministry but she also participated in one of the church's summertime traditions – the gospel concert for the annual youth boot camp at Evangel Temple in Largo. Each year, as a culminating event for a weeklong youth conference, the church sponsored a free concert featuring gospel-recording artist Commissioned. People stood in line for hours waiting to enter the sanctuary to experience a powerful worship experience. The summer of the researcher's junior year of high school marked a monumental event in her life and in her ministry. As expected, people waited for hours to

get into the Commissioned concert, and as usual, the worship experience was intense. During this agonizing waiting period, she thought about the tough decisions she needed to make: which college to attend and what to major in once she got there. She was convinced that she was going to be a biology major in preparation for medical school. Therefore, she had narrowed her choices to four schools, but she was still feeling uneasy and anxious about the major decisions that lay ahead of her for her senior year of high school. As she began to feel overwhelmed by the weight of these decisions, God sent a message, at that moment, directly to her as she sat in that sanctuary on that Saturday evening. Marvin Sapp began to minister to the youth between songs; then, he made a statement that would alter the course of her life. He explained to the young people that if they wanted to know what God wanted them to do with their lives all they had to do was ask. She had never heard anyone state it so simply. The researcher closed her eyes and sincerely prayed to God for an answer on what God would have her to do with her life; and as soon as she asked, God provided an answer – not through a burning bush and not from a thunderous voice from heaven. Her call to the ministry was delivered to her through a still, soft voice that echoed through her heart and center– declaring to her that she would spend her life preaching God’s Word. As she opened her eyes, she was amazed at the answer she had just received. She could not believe that God was choosing to use her in this way. Self-doubt began to creep in immediately; then, over the next year, she came up with millions of reasons why she could not do what God had instructed. She consistently came up with a litmus test for her calling. She would purposefully not prepare for things that she was asked to do at church. She figured that if God truly wanted to use her as God’s instrument that God would provide the words for her to say. God was faithful in using her in every opportunity that she was given to stand in front of God’s people – for simple things like giving the welcome on Sunday morning to speaking at a high school graduation dinner for the seniors. After a year of wrestling and denying God’s calling, the researcher acknowledged her calling into ministry on the Sunday before she left for college.

When the researcher enrolled at Virginia Union, she was a Biology major; however, by her second semester, she switched to Religious Studies. By the end of her first year, she had an enlightening conversation with Dean John Kinney, which led her to change her major— for the last time— to Sociology. She traveled home frequently during her college years to spend time at her home church, where she received training and instruction from her senior pastor. Her last year of college was marked by her initial sermon at Antioch Baptist Church in Upper Marlboro, Maryland and her decision to continue her education at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union.

As she entered into seminary, the researcher determined within herself to find a place where she could utilize her gifts and grow professionally within ministry. The researcher was offered her first full-time ministry position as the Youth Pastor of Mount Hope Baptist Church in Fredericksburg, Virginia when she began her first year in seminary. During her tenure as a full-time seminary student, she worked part time for an area credit company and drove one hour, twice a week, to fulfill her duties as Youth Pastor. She learned many valuable leadership lessons during her time at Mount Hope. As she sought to teach her youth about God, they taught her the meaning of sacrifice, trust, compassion, and love—invaluable qualities that would prove helpful in the years to come. In fact, the 1999 Columbine High School tragedy in Colorado created the initial testing of those qualities. That violent and shocking event created a sense of fear and anxiety regarding how to talk to the kids about what had transpired. It was the first time in her spiritual/professional career that the researcher had to minister in a time of national tragedy. As she walked into Bible Study that evening, she was not sure what to say to the youth. She was not even sure what she needed to say. There were more kids than normal in the room, and their eyes met hers as she walked into the door. When she sat down with them, she just began to talk. Although, she does not remember exactly what she said, the researcher does recall how all the youth shared their fears, their sadness, and their feelings over the tragic story.

That evening, the researcher learned the important ministerial responsibility of providing presence because sometimes there are no right answers or no right words of comfort that will make sense of senseless situations. There are times in life when the tragedies are so intense that all anyone can do and should do is just be there. The researcher will always be grateful to Mount Hope for helping her to begin the discovery of learning who she was as a minister.

In addition to working for the church, the researcher was actively involved with the Virginia Baptist General Convention (BGC), where she assisted in planning and facilitating various youth and young adult events throughout the state. One of the most effective ministry experiences that she was blessed to work with was the annual youth retreats hosted by VBGC at the Eagle Eyrie Campgrounds in Lynchville, Virginia. This state-sponsored event welcomed nearly one thousand young people, three times during the summer. Each year, the BGC staff worked hard to coordinate a memorable, powerful, and life-changing ministry weekend for junior high and high school students. It was during these retreats that the researcher personally witnessed God moving through the lives of people in miraculous ways. At the event, she wept as she witnessed young people willingly bring their concealed guns, other weapons, and drugs to the altar as they were stirred by the preaching of God's Word and the power of worship. Then, she was awestruck as girls shared their admissions of suicidal thoughts because they experienced safety among an effective small group. Later, the researcher dropped to her knees at the vision of hundreds of young people weeping and worshipping together on the mountaintop during the retreat. It was during these weekends on the mountain that God allowed her to find her voice and her passion in the pulpit. As an adult, she is amazed by the opportunities afforded to her at such a young age—favorable occasions to speak to so many young people and to influence their lives through preaching and teaching. In addition, she does not believe BGC truly comprehended the huge responsibility it encountered every summer when it invited youth from across the state to confront their spiritual crossroads. Instead, the staff focused on establishing the perfect

atmosphere and environment for true ministry to take place. Of course, God used the staff's innocence and inexperience to seize control of the ministerial moment. God did not allow the staff or the participant's education, experience, or preconceived notions of worship interfere with the ultimate retreat agenda: coming into God's presence as real people. By the end of this retreat, the young people of Eagle Eyrie taught the researcher how to let go and worship freely.

As the researcher entered her last year of seminary, she was forced to make a decision about the next chapter of her life: what should she do next. At this point in her career, she had worked for three years as the Youth Pastor at Mount Hope. Although she could have easily stayed in that position, she felt that God was about to elevate her to a new place; she was not sure where that new place would be. Full-time ministry positions were not in abundance in Virginia. Opportunities were even more limited for a woman. Therefore, those realities made her decision about the next chapter of her life in ministry even more challenging. By this time, her parents had moved to Dallas, Texas. Therefore, if she decided to return to the Maryland/DC area, there was no longer a "home" there for her. Additionally, there were no career ministry opportunities waiting for her at her home church. She was sure her pastor would have loved to have her home, but she wanted to secure a full-time ministry position. After class one afternoon, one of her classmates told her about an open position at his home church in Phoenix, Arizona. The church was looking for someone to serve as its full-time minister of children, youth, and young adults. She asked her classmate to help her gather more information to help her determine if this position was something she wanted to consider. When she received the job description a week later, she decided to take a risk and apply for the position. The researcher had never visited Arizona. In fact, she had never travelled to this far west; so she was excited about the possibility of seeing a new part of the country. When she forwarded her ministerial resume to the church, she really did not believe anything would come from the search committee. It felt as if was a shot in the dark so there was little expectation that anything would ever materialize from her inquiry.

Therefore, she was completely surprised when she received a request in March of 2001 to come to Arizona for an interview. Her actual interview was scheduled for the third weekend in May, along with an invitation to preach at this church on the same weekend.

From March 2001 to May 2001, the researcher was also busy preparing for her ordination. The pastor that she worked for in Fredericksburg made the decision to assist her in this next phase in her ministry. One of her mentors and professors served as her catechizer and provided a supportive presence throughout the entire process. The researcher's childhood pastor preached her ordination service. She will always hold the memory of him preaching to her close to her heart. In this busy season of her life, she was facing graduation from her Master of Divinity program, her ordination, and her interview for a ministry opportunity, which was located on the other side of the country. The impact of that season's stress was tremendous because she felt completely overwhelmed by the uncertainty of life, and how all of these life decisions would be revealed. Amid this transitional period, the researcher sought to understand where a potential relationship or marriage would fit into her life because any she realized that any relationship would be filled with extraordinary expectations and demands on both individuals. In fact, the man that she was involved with at that time was dealing with his own ministry aspirations and calling. Their callings were clearly tugging them into two different directions: He longed to have someone who would follow his lead and go where God directed him. She desired to honor the woman God was calling her to become and to be true to what she believed the voice of God was revealing to her. Eventually, he expressed his unhappiness with her intention to consider the position in Phoenix. Despite his disapproval, she knew that she had to stand firm on what God was saying to her. She made the commitment to give her life and her all to God. Now, this commitment required her to willingly sacrifice her relationship and possible future with this man for Christ.

When the researcher arrived in Arizona, she remembers being struck by the extraordinary beauty of the land. The mountains were beautiful; the palm trees were breathtaking. She had never seen beauty like this before. She remembers simply whispering "Thank you, God" as she drove away from the airport, visually absorbing this new experience and the scenery. The weekend in Arizona flew by with lightning speed: she interviewed, she preached twice on Sunday morning, and then had an opportunity to go to an evening service to hear the senior pastor speak. After the evening service, the researcher sat down to talk to him in the lobby of the hotel where she stayed. He was not going to be in town for the interview that was scheduled for the next evening, so he wanted a chance to talk to her before he left. The conversation was brief, but easy flowing. The next evening, she participated in a panel interview with approximately twelve people who represented various facets of the church's leadership. She left the valley of the sun convinced that Arizona would be her new home. Two weeks after her interview, she received an official offer for the job. After much prayer and consideration, she called to accept the position while she attended the Hampton's Minister's Conference. She moved to Phoenix to begin working at First Institutional Baptist Church on August 1, 2001.

The time the researcher spent working at First Institutional marked a difficult season in her life. Her first two months in the position arrived with tremendous loss and tragedy. Two weeks after she moved to Arizona, her senior pastor passed away. She was completely stunned by the loss. He was the only spiritual father she had ever known. He believed in her and her gifts. He consistently encouraged her and provided words of support when she dealt with the challenges of being a woman in ministry. Not having his presence at this pivotal point and new chapter of her ministry life was an unbearable reality. A month after they buried her pastor, the national tragedy of September 11th occurred. The researcher remembers waking up that morning and watching the television in disbelief as the events unfolded. With her family connections and ties in the Washington, DC area, she was horrified to hear the news of the plane hitting the Pentagon. For hours, she could not reach her family

members or friends by telephone because the lines were jammed. The researcher remembers driving to church that morning completely numb. As she sat in her office, she attempted to grasp all that had transpired. She recalls that she felt completely disconnected from her loved ones; she felt completely isolated from family and friends. Emotionally, she resided in a barren desert and she felt alone.

Within the first few months, it became apparent that First Institutional was a church that was still attempting to heal from the senior pastor's dramatic divorce. An undercurrent of anger and mistrust crippled the congregation and stifled its ability to grow. Instead of the congregation confronting the reality of the issues that plagued the church, the researcher quickly became the source of blame and an easy target for the congregants' discontent. On countless occasions, she sat in uncomfortable meetings where her judgment and programming decisions were severely scrutinized, creating situations where she had to defend herself constantly. Then, she was forced to bear the burden of increasing the congregation's numbers through the work that came through her office. Essentially, if church attendance was extremely low on Youth (third) Sunday or Young Adult (second) Sunday, then it was her fault. Consequently, all of this conflict mounted-- creating a significant amount of stress for her, which led her doctor to prescribe blood pressure medication to manage her tension.

As the constant criticism escalated, the researcher's confidence in her gifts and her ministry were severely undermined. Without pastoral support or covering from home, she was forced to tackle this burden alone. It was impossible to explain the level of professional devastation that she was experiencing to peers. In fact, many envied this immense opportunity and failed to understand why she could not make this situation work. For the first time in her life, she dreaded going to church on Sunday mornings and forcing the display of a smile on her face to hide her pain. For several years, part of her Sunday ritual reflected her agonizing and daily reality: to stand and serve at this church as

she quietly dealt with the tension and strain of an unhealthy professional relationship. It was a destructive connection that held new challenges and unpredictable sources of stress every day and every week.

One of the most significant ministry moments the researcher experienced during her years at First Institutional occurred at a youth mission trip to Mexico. The FIBC youth ministry collaborated with the youth ministry of a valley COGIC church to sponsor the building of a home through the Amor Ministry in Mexico. A group of five adults took a group of ten young people to Mexico for a week. On this mission trip, they constructed a house for a young family in a small Mexican village without using power tools. They slept in tents and stayed in a campground that had no running water. She had never experienced life without these luxuries. The days were long and the work was difficult. However, there was nothing comparable to being able to demonstrate God's love through service. She will never forget the joy on the face of the young husband who came to the site every day to assist them in building what would be his home for his young family. He was so worried that people would steal the building supplies that he decided to sleep on the ground at the site every night. The researcher will never forget the smiles of the young children of the village who visited the site each day. The young people performed a puppet show for the village children on the last day; despite the language barrier, the researcher believed the love of God was evident.

Although there was great strides and progress made within the Children, Youth and Young Adult Ministry during this time period, the researcher knew for her own spiritual and emotional health that she had to move on. The researcher's time at First Institutional ended during the summer of 2004. The senior pastoral leadership staff experienced sudden and frequent departures from fall 2003 to summer 2004. In November 2003, the Minister of Evangelism and Discipleship resigned; his resignation was followed by his family members' decision to terminate their church membership. By

the spring of 2004, the Minister of Pastoral Counseling and Family resigned also. With the official and agonizing departures of her friends and colleagues in ministry, it became very difficult for the researcher to remain in her post. During their tenure at FIBC, these men had offered genuine support, love, and friendship to the researcher. In fact, they were not merely her colleagues, they had become her family. Later, she realized that she had no desire to continue to struggle through each week without their supportive presence. Therefore, during a meeting in May of 2004, the researcher informed the pastor that the last Sunday in August would be her final day in her position. Then, on her twenty-eighth birthday, August 29, 2004, she stepped down from the pulpit of First Institutional Baptist Church for the last time. Within a month of leaving that position, her stress diminished and she stopped taking her blood pressure medication.

The researcher experienced a season of healing after leaving First Institutional. In the aftermath of that episode, she was damaged spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. She had to retreat to find herself again. She sought to regain insight about who she was and who God had called and predestined her to become in ministry. During her healing, she did not preach or teach for a period. In fact, she intentionally avoided the pulpit as she tried to reclaim what had been lost – her confidence, peace, joy, and love for ministry. She was so grateful that God loved her enough to sustain her in that season by surrounding her with brothers in ministry that refused to let her wander too far away from the pulpit. The researcher remembers the Sunday that she finally returned to the pulpit. She was overcome with joy and peace to be back in a space that felt like home. There is no emotion comparable to the joy the researcher finds when preaching. It is her calling, her gift, and it is who God created her to be.

As the researcher traveled through her period of healing and reconnection, God began to reawaken a vision in her that she had wrestled with for years. In her heart, she knew that God's desire was for her to pastor one day; although, it was one of the last things that she wanted to consider or actually do. After years of denying what she knew God was revealing to her, she decided to start a ministry. The birth of her daughter made this decision to step out on faith easier. The researcher wanted to provide her child with an example of how important it is not to limit God with anxieties or fears. She wanted her daughter to be proud of who she was and how God works through her gifts. She gave her daughter life, but her daughter blessed the researcher by returning her life in return. Her daughter's presence provides clarity of purpose and meaning.

Being led by the Holy Spirit in January 2010, the researcher met with a group of ten people who were committed to working and pouring their energy toward the beginning the work and ministry of Imani Community Church. In this meeting, she presented the vision and purpose of the ministry as given to her by God. She shared that the vision of the church is being dedicated to growing together as a body of believers by providing refuge to the lost, and showing God's love through meaningful relationships, while having a positive impact on the surrounding community. The mission of the Imani Community Church was a commitment to loving one another as God loves, learning to live as God intends, and leading others to know God. In an effort to bring all the people in the initial group to the same point, the researcher provided additional background information on her vision for the church that God intended for Imani to be in the immediate and global community during the first Sunday's worship meeting.

The driving force behind the desire to establish Imani Community Church grew from the pastor's experience working as a member of the ministerial staff of a large, urban church in Phoenix, Arizona. After resigning from her position at the church, the pastor made a decision to no longer

worship in her former place of employment. As she searched for a new place to worship and use her ministerial gifts, she identified a set of criteria to help her determine her next place of worship and work. The criterion included, but was not limited, to the following: being under the leadership of an educated pastor, a church that was socially conscious and committed to doing the work of the community, and a multicultural worship setting that was loving and accepting to all who entered its doors. It became evident that there were not many options that fit the criteria. As the researcher began to speak to others who had recently become disenchanted with their current places of worship, she began to hear many echo a repeated need: People were searching for something different. After much prayer and direction from God, the researcher made a decision to meet the needs of the people by creating and planting Imani Community Church.

Imani was designed to be a multicultural congregation in the city of Tempe, Arizona. The decision to press forward with a multicultural evangelistic approach was due in large part to the demographics of the surrounding community. The city of Tempe is located in the eastern part of the valley; it is adjacent to the city of Phoenix; and it is the home of Arizona State University. Since a major university is located in the city, the percentage of persons over the age of twenty-five with at least a bachelor's degree is forty percent. According to the United States Census, the population of Tempe is approximately under 175,000. The highest racial subgroup located in this area is Latino American, which amount to 33,000 people. The median income is \$53,000 and the median age is twenty-eight years old. Tempe is also the home of two major Fortune 500 companies – US Airways and Insight. In order to be relevant to the surrounding community, the church needed to be intentional about reaching out to different racial groups. The praise and worship team was designed to reflect the membership's racial diversity. The original worship team consisted of one African

American female, one white female, and one Latino male. Although the church would be intentional about reaching out to different races, the approach to ministry would be Afrocentric – drawing from the rich traditions and history of the African American church.

It was decided that the location for Sunday morning worship would be Kyrene Middle School in Tempe, Arizona. This location was ideal for several reasons. First, a community consisting of several housing developments and apartment complexes would surround the church's location. Secondly, the school was the researcher's place of employment; therefore, pivotal and important community relationships were already established at this location. Although the initial intent was to keep the business of the church completely separate from the school where worship was held, a significant number of the core membership were teachers and administration.

On Sunday, April 4, 2010 at 10 a.m., the Imani Community Church celebrated its first worship service in the Multipurpose Room of the Kyrene Middle School. Forty-five people attended this initial worship celebration. The worship service consisted of praise and worship, sermon, offering, and closing prayer. Over the next year, the church continued to grow together and expand its ministry. On Sunday, August 29, 2010, Imani conducted its first church business meeting. During the meeting, the vision and mission for the church was explained in depth to the congregation. The researcher also shared a ministry plan for the next six months. Ministry needs were discussed and delegated. The first Sunday of October marked the beginning of the WOW (Worship our Way) Child Care ministry.

The time spent with Imani Community Church was a time of healing and restoration. However, as one area was being built up and re-established, another area of the researcher's life was faltering under unforeseeable challenges that resulted ended in a divorce. As a woman in ministry, there was always a struggle with maintaining balance between family responsibilities and ministry.

Being a new mother, working full time for a demanding school district, and pastoring a new church plant were heavy responsibilities for the researcher to carry alone and quickly resulted in stress and exhaustion. Being a spouse of a clergy person is difficult for most, and sometimes it takes an unfortunate toll on a relationship. The challenges were made greater during the final years of marriage and unfortunately resulted in divorce. As a mother of a young child and a pastor, the researcher struggled with doubt and uncertainty on how church members would respond to the divorce. Attempting to deal with a very, private situation in the public eye was difficult but the researcher eventually found great support and encouragement from her members.

As a result of this unexpected personal transition, space was now created for possibilities outside of the state of Arizona. In the past, when ministry or professional opportunities opened outside of the state, because of her marriage, the researcher was unable to consider. However, as she began to pray and ask God for direction, the researcher believed that God was leading her back to the East Coast. Imani Community Church was having difficulty with finding a place to worship due to summer construction projects occurring in the school district where they worshipped. As a result of these challenges, the church was forced to take some time off where they were not meeting on a regular basis. It was during this down time of rest, the researcher received confirmation from God that the time of release had come and she needed to move back to Richmond, Virginia. During the fall of 2011, the researcher preached her last sermon as the pastor of Imani Community Church and returned to the East Coast. Upon her return, she began to work closely with the seminary staff at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. The Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University is responsible for equipping and empowering numerous male and female clergy who are seeking to continue to grow academically and professionally. The school's mission is "to act as a catalyst for the critical and conscientious faith development of students; to assist students in defining and developing the specifics of their service in

ministry; to provide a compassionate and nurturing context for substantive theological study; and to serve as the facilitator of the church in defining and identifying worship in its broader aspects and in understanding its mission and it affects everyday life.”¹

The context for the researcher was the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology. The School of Theology is located on the campus of Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. The American Baptist Home Mission Society established Virginia Union in 1865. After the Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, this organization began to hold classes for former slaves. One of the original missions of Virginia Union University was to provide religious education for clergy. When the school was first founded, educational opportunity was limited to men. However, when the originally established school merged with Hartshorn Memorial College in 1932, the University became coed. Religious education was limited to the undergraduate program until Dr. John Malcus Ellison, who was the University’s first African American president, decided to broaden the religious education offered by the school. In 1941, the Graduate School of Religion was formed at Virginia Union. The school partnered with the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Union Theological Seminary to form the Richmond Theological Consortium. In 1969, the school was renamed the School of Theology. In 1997, the school was renamed once again: the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology. Currently, the school is housed on the Virginia Union University campus in Kingsley Hall. The school currently offers three degree programs: the Master of Divinity degree, the Master of Christian Education, and the Doctorate of Ministry. Currently the graduate school population is approximately 420 students. The students are able to complete their program of studies during the day program or the non-traditional hours program with classes facilitated in the

¹ Virginia Union University, http://www.vuu.edu/samuel_dewitt_proctor_school_of_theology.aspx (accessed June 1, 2012).

evenings and on the weekends. Over 40% of the student population is female. Out of the 374 students who graduated in May 2012, 46% were female. The current dean is Dr. John Kinney.

The researcher's undergraduate and graduate degree studies were completed on the campus of Virginia Union University. After acknowledging her call into ministry at eighteen years of age, a large amount of her formal training and theological development were completed in the halls and classrooms of this historic university. Her gender and her calling were both celebrated at STVU, a place where she found great support and encouragement to develop her skills as a minister. It has now been ten years since she received her Master of Divinity. During that time, she obtained invaluable practical experience needed to work in the local church as a staff minister and as a pastor. The population of female graduate students continues to increase each year at the seminary. Unfortunately, this increase is not reflected in the professional leadership within the local church.

It is the researcher's belief that there is a lack of mentoring and professional development opportunities provided to African American women to prepare for leadership within the local church context. This is reflected in the researcher's own personal ministry journey and is evident in the current programs available at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology. Although there were positive moments where the researcher was connected to leaders who had a vested and expressed interest in her development, it was a struggle to find consistent support and encouragement that would have assisted her as she grew in her calling. It is the researcher's belief that a supplemental leadership development program is needed to assist female seminarians by providing additional resources and tools in preparation for ministry as they exit their graduate program.

CHAPTER 2

THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Transformational leadership (also referred to as visionary leadership or charismatic leadership) is one of the most popular theories in current academic conversations on leadership. In the article, "Transformational Leadership and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Meaningful Work," the authors included an in-depth examination of transformational leadership. This study also included information on the connection between leadership and the value that a person places upon their work. The researchers examined a group of workers over a designated period of time and used a qualitative method of analyzing the data collected to determine the impact of leadership. The authors sought, through their study, to examine the relationship between a follower's emotional and psychological well-being and the transformational leadership at their place of employment. This article also explored the relationship between leadership and the way a person views self and emotional health. Within this model, one seeks to define what it means for a person to view his/her work as meaningful.

This journal article provided information on a study that was conducted by the authors to determine if transformational leadership had any impact on the personal and professional development of the followers. In reaction to the absence of documented, research-based evidence pertaining to the ability of transformational leaders to assist followers in reaching their full potential, the authors proposed to offer “a conceptual framework encompassing three main domains of follower development – motivation, morality, and empowerment. The transformational leader provides motivation for followers to not only meet the stated goals, but to push beyond those goals and make extra effort in every given task. In doing so, the leader is meeting the “self-actualization” needs of their followers based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs.¹ Morality refers to the leader’s ability to influence the follower to adapt the morality of the organization as his/her own. Empowerment produces followers that “take initiative, participate actively, are self-starters and go and above and beyond the job.”²

Authentic leadership theory is another model that continues to gain popularity in the last decade. The authenticity of a leader refers to a leader’s ability to accurately see, accept, and present her true self. A leader’s willingness to be authentic inspires authenticity in those who follow her/him. This model is based upon the belief that “through increased self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive modeling, authentic leaders foster the development of authenticity in their followers.”³ Once the characteristic of authenticity is developed in followers, it sets the path for positive outcomes in the followers’ life, including emotional and mental well-being and optimum performance. Authentic leaders are “those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as

¹ Kara Arnold et al., “Transformational Leadership and Psychological Well-Being: The Mediating Role of Meaningful Work,” *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 12, no. 3 (2007): 199.

² Ibid.

³ Raymond Sparrowe, “Authentic Leadership and the Narrative Self,” *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2005): 430.

being aware of their own and others' moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and how are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high of moral character."⁴

With the continued increase of females in graduate and doctoral level seminary programs, there is a steady increase of literature centered on gender-specific or gender-inclusive professional ministry development geared toward women. Dr. Gardner Taylor stated in a interview when asked about women in ministry, "There are more women in the seminaries than men. And that says something about what the future leadership of the churches are going to be."⁵ In the book, *Not Without A Struggle*, Vashti McKenzie examines the historical and current trends concerning African American women clergy leadership development. Within this book, McKenzie delves into the historical role of women from Kemet to contemporary times. She discusses the prominent leadership role of women in the religious life of ancient Africa and advances through the pages of history to the role of women in post-slavery Black churches. Additionally, McKenzie travels through the pages of history to identify the role of women in America from the early 1700s to contemporary times. "It appears that from the earliest colonial times in America women were organizing, preaching, and/or exercising leadership in religious societies."⁶ The amazing examples provided by these pioneering women in history inspire women who continue to struggle to walk within their call and to be the leaders that God desires for them to be.

In order to gain an understanding of the struggles and challenges African American women face today, McKenzie interviewed and surveyed women throughout the country to gain a better

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The Visionary Project, "Gardner Taylor: Women in Leadership in the Church," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zOp4hskzoE> (accessed August 12, 2012).

⁶ Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership For African American Women in Ministry* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2011), 24.

understanding of their personal journeys. From this information, McKenzie was able to develop several womanist leadership styles. In addition to the survey information, McKenzie used the leadership styles presented by Charles Keating in his work, *Leadership Book*. Keating's four leadership styles include the following: High relationship and low task, high task and low relation, high task and high relation, and low task and low relation.⁷ The differences that exist among each Keating leadership style are determined by the leader's level of focus on relationship and/or work. It is the goal of each leader to determine where they fall on this leadership spectrum with the goal being task and relationship balance.

The survey information, along with the historical, biblical, and theological research provided the foundation for the ten commandments of ministry. "The Ten Commandments For Ministry" are a collection of leadership strategies offered as a resource for African American clergywomen in particular...may be considered as a group of leader laws or a code of leader conduct.⁸ The commandments include advice about the importance of networking and building healthy relationships within and outside of the congregation. There is helpful information on the urgency of self-care and building a team that assists in carrying the heavy load of ministry and filling in the places where the leadership is weak. In addition to the Ten Commandments in Ministry, McKenzie discusses the Ten Womanist Commandments for Clergy that are more gender specific. These commandments include, but are not limited to, the following: "Thou Shall have African American Men as Brothers; Thou Shall Not Compromise Your Femininity for the Pulpit; Thou Shall Not be Superwoman and Thou Shall Have a Home Life."⁹

⁷ Ibid., 104.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 105-107.

In the study, "Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling," the researchers gathered qualitative and quantitative data on the differences between the professional journey from ordination to career of clergymen and women. In order to gain a better understanding, the information was collected by conducting surveys and interviews of over five thousand men and women, including clergy from various denominational groups. Among the denominations included in the survey, the United Methodist had the highest number of female-ordained clergy, followed by the United Church of Christ.¹⁰ Although the numbers of ordained women continues to increase, "female clergy remain a minority in almost every area of church life." In addition, the researchers found evidence that women clergy are still not earning salaries that are equal to their male colleagues. "Women only earn 91% of the salaries of men working the same hours, in the same types of jobs, within the same denomination, in the same size church."¹¹

Another gender disparity within the research was in the career paths of male and female clergy. Female career paths often lead to working staff positions, while male career paths lead to more upper-level managerial positions.

The careers of clergywomen and clergymen, represented by the sequence of transitions made in their first three jobs, are different. Although having children during the first five years after ordination makes some difference in the career paths of clergywomen and clergymen, gender is a more significant factor than family situation. An analysis of the actual sequences of jobs held by clergywomen and clergymen shows that men are more likely to occupy "managerial type" positions and women are more likely to occupy "staff type positions." As a consequence women are frequently "tracked" into employment in secondary labor markets--holding jobs that have less organizational power, lower salaries, less responsibility, and fewer benefits.¹²

The data gathered in this study also highlighted the "untraditional" path that a majority of female respondents reported that included being bi-vocational and enjoying more flexibility in their career

¹⁰ Barbara Brown Zikmund, Adair Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang, *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1998), 36-100.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

paths. "Clergy women are reinventing ministry for the future, refusing the old definitions and expectation and are expanding the very essence of Christian ministry and guiding the whole church to rethink and renew its leadership and membership."¹³

In a research study completed by Dr. Delores Carpenter, a sample of 324 clergywomen was surveyed concerning their current professional placement.¹⁴ Among the ministers surveyed, 69 reported they were working as full-time pastors, while 32 reported being part-time pastors. Out of the 101 women who reported working as assistant pastors, 39 reported working full time and 62 reported working part time. Altogether, 202 women surveyed were working either full-time or part-time pastoral ministry positions. The number of females working as full-time pastors increased from 1985 to 1999, but has begun to decline in recent years. The survey also examined the salary disparities that exist between male and female clergy. Males working as a full-time pastors reported an average annual salary of about \$30,000; females working as full-time pastors reported earning an average annual salary of \$20,000.

Seminary education continues to play an important role in the professional development of female clergy. In the post-colonial times of the twentieth century, seminary education was often not viewed as a necessity for a pastoral leadership career. During this period, pastors were selected based on the people's opinion of the level of a person's biblical knowledge and displayed leadership skills. Seminary education only began to grow in popularity as a vehicle for clergy professional development during the 1970s. When seminaries began to see an increase in the student population, women only made up a small percentage of that number. At that point, women who were enrolled,

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Delores Carpenter, *A Time For Honor: A Portrait of African American Clergywomen* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2001), 25-99.

sought preparation to work in the fields of Christian Education or sacred music.¹⁵ In the 1980s, the number of women attending seminary began to increase and actually surpass male enrollment at many institutions. Some seminaries “were much slower to admit women to pastoral tracks because of resistance by conservative faculty members and administration. Another factor helping to open up the seminary to women was the quickly declining applications from male students to pastoral tracks.”¹⁶ As the female enrollment increased, seminaries responded in a variety of ways.

Researchers have found that many women continue to struggle with getting respect from various seminary staff. “Male faculty often took a mentoring role in relation to male students but tended to keep women at arm’s length, and they had notably more informal contact with men than women.”¹⁷

As women exit seminary, the next challenge is securing a position at a local church, while fighting against the gender stereotypes held by some laity. Dr. Theresa Fry Brown, professor of homiletics at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, suggests that many female clergy begin the battle against sexism as soon as they acknowledge a call into ministry. Women are repeatedly questioned and asked to “defend” their call more often than their male counterparts. In the late 1980s, Dr. Edward Lehman conducted an extensive study of the attitudes of the laity within several American Baptist and Presbyterian churches concerning female clergy leadership. The following table captures the study participants’ responses concerning their perspectives about gender specific stereotypes.

¹⁵ Jackson Carroll, Barbara Hargrove, and Adair Lummis, *Women of the Cloth: A New Opportunity for the Churches* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 77.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 84-87.

Table 1. Gender-specific Stereotypes

Gender specific stereotype	Baptist	Presbyterians
Women clergy have higher absenteeism	37%	27%
Women clergy have a higher rate of job turnover	42%	18%
Family roles create emotional problems for women clergy	57%	53%
Clergy women's children will be maladjusted	45%	30%
Women are weak leaders in the church	49%	37%
Women's temperament is not well suited for the pastorate	29%	18%

Source: Adapted from Edward Lehman, *Women Clergy: Breaking through Gender Barriers*. (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1985), 56.

According to research, many women are caught completely off guard by the sexist attitudes they encounter when they enter their first professional appointment; they are often “blind-sided and ill-prepared” and “tend to interpret their difficulties as personal failures rather than recognizing them as part of systemic problems, and therefore, they often try to handle the situation alone rather than seeking institutional remedies or the support of others.”¹⁸

In the book, *Can A Sistah Get A Little Help?*, Dr. Theresa Fry Brown gives practical advice on how female clergy could approach the gender-specific conflicts that arise with the congregation. She recounts occurrences in her own ministry journey when laity critiqued everything about her – from the way she wore her hair to her preaching style. In a section entitled “Mother Wit and Sistah Sense,” Brown encouraged female clergy to “choose your battles wisely. Fighting on all fronts depletes your resilience.”¹⁹ She recalled a time when the pastor that she was working with instructed her and the other female clergy to not cry while in the pulpit because the people would view them as “weak.”

For years, Brown describes struggling with discovering her own voice in ministry. Her struggle ceased when she was introduced to a pioneering figure in the fight for gender equality –

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Theresa Fry Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help?* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 35-67.

Anna Julia Cooper. Cooper, a nineteenth century educator and activist, spent many years fighting for the equality for women within the church and the greater community. Cooper "believed that women should speak for themselves, write and live their own history."²⁰

It is not the intelligent woman vs. the ignorant woman; nor the white woman vs. the black, the brown and the red – it is not even the cause of woman vs. man. Nay I say, 'tis woman's strongest vindication for speaking that the world needs to hear her voice. It would be subversive of every human interest that the cry of one-half the human family be stifled.²¹

"Feminization" refers to an influx of females entering a professional field that has historically been dominated by men. When this phenomenon occurs, there is a noticeable decrease in opportunities for men, and a decline in the so-called prestige of the profession. Dr. Paula D. Nesbitt performed a research study that is described at length in the book, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives*. Within this book, she concentrates her research efforts on the Episcopalian and Unitarian Universalist denominations. Within these denominations, there was a notable increase in ordained female leadership during the 1970s. From her research, Nesbitt concluded that the increase of female clergy did not influence the opportunities available for male. Instead, as the number of ordained female clergy increased, the professional opportunities for men increased as well. Despite these findings, Nesbitt expresses concern regarding the future of the professional plight of female clergy.

...the future of female clergy realistically appears to be one increasingly crowded with female colleagues in lower to mid-level placements as the occupation continues to feminize. Although some women will attain positions of religious leadership, it is doubtful that they will increase beyond a token level in either number or influence unless current gender-segregated practices in placements and opportunities are mitigated. In short, women will continue to labor in the vineyard while the masters reap the fruit of the harvest...²²

²⁰ Ibid., 26.

²¹ Anna Julia Cooper, *A Voice from the South by a Colored Woman from the South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 31.

²² Paula D. Nesbitt, *The Feminization of the Clergy in America: Occupational and Organizational Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 22.

In addition to fighting against the systemic forces of sexism, research suggests that female clergy also struggle against internal conflicts that can create obstacles that prevent them from moving into leadership within the local church. Extensive research has been conducted, over the years, in the area of pastoral theology and care pertaining to the impact of gender-socialization and the female perspective of the traditional roles of pastoral leadership. As young children, women are often taught to value relationships and to place others' needs above their own.²³ Frequently, this socialization can clash with the personality traits that are necessary for pastoral leadership – qualities such as assertiveness and being called out and separated from the community to assume a role of authority. “If we link women’s socialized scripts, it becomes more apparent why many women struggle in authoring and being authorized in their calls.”²⁴

In an effort to fight against these performative scripts and socialized images concerning relationships and pastoral, McDougall believes that it would be helpful for seminaries and leaders in theological education to adjust their language when describing God’s call. Oftentimes, a calling into ministry is associated with self-denial and self-sacrifice, which are demonstrated through the absence of personal relationships that disregard the manner in which women are socialized. Instead of highlighting self-denial as the normative trait for a person’s calling, McDougall suggests that women “might better envision their callings as a turning to claim God’s grace and a turning to claim themselves.”²⁵ By adjusting this narrative, this approach offers women the ability to identify more affirming language by confirming their calling and being more receptive to the successful utilization of their God-given gifts.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Joy Ann McDougall, “Weaving Garments of Grace: En-Gendering a Theology of the Call to Ordained Ministry For Women Today,” *Theological Education* 39, no. 2 (2003): 153.

McDougall also emphasizes the importance of female clergy having an opportunity to develop their gifts in the faith community. These opportunities to demonstrate their gifts and abilities, while receiving affirmation and leadership from the faith community have a profound impact on future vocational choices. "It often takes the actual experience of assuming pastoral leadership roles in order to confirm women's calls to such positions."²⁶ In addition to practical experience, the support of mentors – both male and female – also plays an important role in professional development. "Studies of women clergy show that such positive experiences of female pastors and priests as role models and mentors, especially early on in the discernment process, encourage women to seek ordination and affirm them in their diverse calls to become pastors, teachers, and leaders in the church."²⁷ Female mentors are able to address gender-specific anxieties such as family and work balance.

McDougall's final suggestion is directed toward theological educators and the local church. In order to affirm women and continue to break down the sexist barriers that exist within the clergy profession, educators and church leaders must identify and challenge their own gender biases and beliefs. For example, church leaders must recognize that female clergy professional timelines and histories often differ dramatically from their male colleagues due to family and ministry balance. In addition, church leadership need to intentionally provide space for women during their selection processes and take an additional step by "being active advocates" to assist female clergy in securing positions.²⁸

Carpenter describes four essential building blocks required to achieve change in the Black church – a transformation needed for this environment to be fertile and receptive for growing dynamic, female leadership. The four strategies include: 1) the Holy Spirit active as an instrumental

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 156

²⁸ Ibid.

in the call of female clergy; 2) the historical-critical method of interpreting the Bible, specifically in texts that are traditionally used in restricting the voice and vocation of women; 3) the utilization of womanist theology; and 4) the "social psychological freedom of lack men and women to remove gender as a defining factor in institutional leadership."²⁹ In order for the church to become a change agent in the struggle to open opportunities that are more professional for women, a re-programming of the years of preaching and teaching that promoted the atmosphere where sexist attitudes persist is essential.

²⁹ Carpenter, *A Time for Honor*, 120.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The sociological theory of gender roles and gender role socialization plays a critical role in women being effective or even open to pursuing leadership roles in the church. Women are socialized to be care takers, peace makers, and non-assertive individuals. Therefore, it is a common tendency among women to deny their own needs and goals for the sake of others. Based on the importance of relationships, it becomes difficult for women to shift to a position of authority or leadership over a group of people. Many associate a calling to pastoral ministry to the purging of self from the greater community to assume a position of authority.

Because of these unique challenges that women in ministry face when they attempt to move into leadership roles within the church, it is imperative that the correct leadership and mentorship is offered to assist women as they continue to advance and develop professionally. The theoretical basis for the leadership development model that will be developed is grounded in the following models: transformational leadership theory and authentic leadership theory. These two models of leadership provide the necessary components that are integral to empowering women leaders in ministry.

Transformational leadership theory is a contemporary model of leadership that is focused on the development and performance of the follower. This follower-centered approach is an appropriate foundation to develop a leadership model that will propel and position African American females for leadership positions within the traditional church. The transformational leader "exerts additional influence by broadening and elevating followers' goals and providing them with confidence to perform beyond the expectations specified in the implicit exchange agreement."¹ This leadership approach focuses on empowering the follower by concentrating efforts and energies on extracting the best performance from those whom you influence. A transformational leader has the ability to see beyond his/her followers' current production level: a focus that includes their potential growth and future possibilities. The scope of the leader is broad enough to identify long-term growth and goals for the follower. He/she has vision for their followers that extend beyond their present state. The transformational leader invests resources and energy towards the development of followers' skills because of this vision. The leader develops the followers' full potential by increasing their motivation and empowerment. The transformational leader is intentional about pouring into the persons who are following him or her. This leader seeks to endorse and push people toward excellence by helping them to reach their absolute capacities. This intentional focus and empowerment frequently results in increased effort that emerges from the followers.

The four dimensions of leaders' behavior for a transformational leader are idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to the charismatic quality within the leader that compels the leader to do the "right thing" and the leader's subsequent behavioral choices that cause other people to follow and identify with him or her. A significant component of this behavioral trait is integrity, which means that the

¹ Taly Divr, Dov Eden, Bruce Avolio, and Boas Shamir, "Impact of Transformational Leadership On Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment," *Academy of Management Journal* 45, no. 4 (August 2002): 735-44.

transformational leader is committed to living a life of moral excellence and character. This commitment to “right” living appeals to followers and strengthens the follower/leader relationship or connection.

The second dimension of behavior for a transformational leader is inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation occurs when the leader develops and casts visions that encourage followers to achieve more and to excel. Being a person of vision is a consistent characteristic that is found among numerous leadership models and theories. An effective leader is a person who can see beyond the present and set goals for the future. The transformational leader takes vision casting to the next level by intentionally involving the followers in this process. The leader not only can cast vision for the church or organization, but the leader is also able to cast vision for the followers. The leader focuses on the followers’ strengths and provides them with the tools to help them see themselves differently and how they can excel and move forward. This vision-casting characteristic is appealing and motivating to followers.

Intellectual stimulation is the fourth behavioral dimension for the transformational leader. The transformational leader demonstrates intellectual stimulation that “challenges assumptions, takes risks and solicits followers’ ideas.”² This type of leader is intent on followers not just doing better, but is determined to help followers think in an excellent way. Instead of accepting concepts and ideas at face value, the transformational leader encourages followers to ask tough questions and formulate their own ideas. This approach motivates followers to exercise a higher level of critical thinking and processing skills. This level of processing boosts self-confidence and permits the followers to become better analytical thinkers. The transformational leader is not afraid to ask why and constantly encourages followers to critically reason and examine issues presented.

² Ronald Piccolo and Jason Colquitt, “Transformational Leadership and Job Behaviors: The Mediating Role of Core Job Characteristics,” *Academy of Management Journal* 49, no. 2 (April 2006): 327-40.

The final behavioral dimension of the transformational leader is individualized consideration. Instead of collectively viewing a group of followers as a whole, the transformational leader considers each person individually and provides attention and empowerment to the individual. Too often, many leaders become consumed with the role of vision casting and other administrative tasks that are required for an organization or church to function effectively. Consequently, the relationship-building aspect of leadership is deficient. However, the transformational leader focuses on the individual by taking the time to understand each follower and the gifts that each person brings to the table, while providing consistent presence and guidance. This type of leader is sensitive to followers' needs and offers constant and consistent coaching and mentorship. In addition to coaching, this type of leader delivers constant feedback and demonstrates appreciation.

A transformational leader provides a great benefit within a mentoring position for female African American clergy. An important aspect of any leader in a religious setting is charisma. This leader must effectively empower women to aim and grasp for more professionally, which means seeking goals beyond vision casting. A charismatic leader who focuses only on the mechanics of making a church work and grow restricts his/her growth and that of his/her followers. It is essential to have a leader that equips and encourages followers to think critically and to formulate their own opinions about issues. By developing this important intellectual skill, the leader is offering individuals the opportunity to learn, sharpen, and trust their own voices. One of the most influential behavioral dimensions emphasizes constructive and constant feedback. Constructive feedback is an imperative and crucial aspect of building professional confidence of the followers.

One of the results of a transformational leader's ability is to increase empowerment among followers and their increased self-efficacy. Self-efficacy can be defined as a person's perception of her capability "to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that

affect their lives.”³ It is the ability to know that you can accomplish a task or a job based on your own understanding of self and gifts. A strong or elevated sense of self-efficacy positively affects a person’s ability to accomplish tasks. For example, if a person strongly believes in her ability to accomplish a task, then she will be more likely to attempt challenging or difficult opportunities. In contrast, a person who has low self-efficacy will likely avoid demanding experiences or events and will view failures as evidence of her low skill set. The transformational leader’s approach would be geared toward increasing his/her followers’ belief in self and ability, which would result in increased effort and results.

According to Dr. Albert Bandura, professor of Psychology from Stanford University, self-efficacy can be developed by these four main sources of influences: 1) mastery of experiences; 2) vicarious experiences by social models; 3) social persuasion; and 4) providing opportunities to exercise skills couple with appropriate appraisal and feedback.⁴ A person’s ability to succeed in any role or responsibility can be linked to having a leader or mentor that was purposed toward building up one’s self-efficacy. This is the transformational leader’s goal: to utilize every opportunity to increase followers’ belief in self and their gifts.

Mastery of experiences is accomplished when a person is afforded opportunities to practice their gifts and skills. Growth and improvement are difficult when there is no possibility to put theory and education into practice. A leader can spend a tremendous amount of time teaching an individual how to accomplish a task effectively. However, true understanding is deepened when there is an opportunity to perform those lessons. When a person is provided with an opportunity to learn by doing, there is an occasion for growth and learning. Growth is equally important as success and failure. Through each experience, a person’s knowledge of self and skill level are sharpened.

³ Kara Arnold et al., “Transformational Leadership and Psychological Well-Being,” 199.

⁴ Albert Bandura, “Perceived Self-Efficacy in Cognitive Development and Functioning,” *Educational Psychologist* 28, no. 2 (1993): 130.

Additionally, by having the opportunity to watch others model desired capabilities, a person is able to increase knowledge of self. This describes the vicarious experience of social models building self-efficacy. This increase of knowledge of self and increased self-efficacy is directly connected to a person's ability to relate to the social model. The more a person can identify with the model, the better the individual feels about his/her own abilities and possibilities.

Social persuasion describes the process by which a person is "persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given activities."⁵ Again, this speaks to the leader's intent to provide consistent, constructive feedback to followers and to encourage their growth. The leader should provide opportunities to highlight followers' gifts and strengths regularly. An effective leader pushes followers to try new tasks, take risks, and tackle challenges where their individual skill sets can shine.

Finally, there must be occasions for individuals to enhance their self-efficacy by using their gifts, without setting them up for failure due to a lack of preparation. A leader must be sensitive enough to avoid pushing a person too quickly into situations or responsibilities that they are not ready to handle. By trying to tackle tasks too quickly, a person's self-efficacy could be damaged, which increases his/her hesitancy to step out and attempt the task again.

Authentic Leadership Theory

The authentic leadership model is a recent, contemporary leadership model that has been developed in the past ten years. Frequently, this leadership model is compared to the transformational leadership model, the charismatic leadership model, and the ethical leadership model. Authentic leaders are "those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge,

⁵ Raymond Sparrowe, "Authentic Leadership and the Narrative Self," *The Leadership Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (2005): 430.

and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and of high moral character.”⁶ The authentic leader is guided by his/her own personal values and refuses to conform to the expectations or ideas of others. This leader’s actions are based on personal value sets and beliefs. This leader refuses to allow other people’s views to influence his/her decisions or approaches to leadership. In every decision, every action, and in every relationship, this individual seeks to be authentic. As a result, the effective authentic leader produces authentic followers. The basis of the leader-follower perspective is an authentic relationship. These individuals are keenly aware of their own beliefs and values; therefore, they are self-confident and trust worthy. The authentic leader concentrates on building followers’ strengths, while creating and maintaining a positive context for the church or business. The key concepts of this leadership model include authenticity, leader self-awareness, and leader self-regulation.

Authenticity refers to a person’s ability to correctly view his/her values, beliefs, and heart. This person can see and understand the self separately from how the world or others might view him/her. This individual is not consumed or persuaded by the others’ perceptions; in fact, this person lives and operates without this type of restriction. Authenticity refers to “owning one’s personal experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to ‘know oneself’ and ‘further implies that one acts in accord with the true self, expressing oneself in ways that are consistent with inner thoughts and feelings.’”⁷ The authentic leader takes cues for direction and decision from within instead of being guided and persuaded by others.

Leader self-awareness is a key component of authentic leadership. In order for a leader to be effective, she/he must have and utilize the ability to examine every aspect of one’s life and

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

personality critically. Through this self-examination, the leader is able to perceive him/her as a leader within the context of functions. A person never completely achieves full self-awareness at any one time; it is a process. A leader should constantly seek opportunities to increase self-awareness at all times. An increased level of self-awareness increases a leader's comprehension of her strengths, weaknesses, and purpose. It also includes understanding one's emotions and personality. Self-awareness includes the ability to recognize one's triggers and weaknesses. Ultimately, an authentic leader's goal is for followers to mirror this approach to increase their effectiveness in their own areas of responsibility and practice.

In addition to an attempt to understand who they are, authentic leaders also have an increased capacity to self-regulate. Self-regulation "is the process through which authentic leaders align their values and intentions and actions."⁸ Authentic leaders are intentional about monitoring their actions to ensure they are exercising self-control in maintaining the values they profess and teach. This type of approach ushers in transparency within the relationship between leader and follower that is an integral part of the authentic leadership model. This component provides the foundation of a trusting relationship between leader and follower that facilitates follower development.

There are many similarities between the transformational leadership model and the authentic leadership model. Both methods concentrate on the development of the follower and providing consistent feedback – with the goal of development and growth. Both authentic and transformational leaders can be described as "optimistic, hopeful, developmentally oriented and of high moral character." The major difference between transformational leadership and authentic leadership is the fact that authentic leaders do not always concentrate on the transformation and/or development of their followers into leaders. Along with these two leadership models, as previously stated, it is important to not the socialization of women in our society and how that manifests in providing

⁸ Ibid.

effective, gender- specialized leadership development models “Women’s self-identity is often defined in terms of nurturing their economy of relationships with others and by a culture that raises women to consider the needs of others, to take care of men, and to care for children.”⁹

Biblical Foundations

Ruth 1:16-18 reads, “But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die – there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!’”

The Old Testament book of Ruth is described as being written between 950 and 700 BC. Scholars have found it difficult to pinpoint exactly when the book was written; but based on the language, elements found within the text they have narrowed it down to this era. The date of authorship of the book is also based on the concluding comments of the book, which refer to the genealogy of King David. “Since it’s concluding genealogy ends with David, the book could have been written during his reign (1000 BC), perhaps even written for the royal Davidic family, but certainly before the Babylonian Exile of 587 BC.”¹⁰ Other scholars believe the book of Ruth could have been written after the Exile. With no true consensus on when the book was written, it has been difficult to establish a writer of this work. Some Jewish scholars attribute this book to Samuel. Recently, scholars have also suggested that a woman could have written this book. However, there is no concluding evidence to prove either theory correct.

⁹ Joy Ann McDougall, “Weaving Garments of Grace: En-Gendering a Theology of the Call to Ordained Ministry For Women Today,” *Theological Education*, 39, no. 2 (2003): 153.

¹⁰ Nathan Tiessen, “A Theology of Ruth: The Dialectic or Countertestimony and Core Testimony,” *Direction* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 252.

There is also great debate concerning the purpose and background of the book of Ruth. Some scholars contend that the book was written as a “polemic against the exclusion of the Moabites from the community of Israel.”¹¹ Other scholars believe that the book was written to defend Ezra and Nehemiah’s policy on mixed marriages in the post-exile Jewish community. There have also been scholars that have suggested the book was written as a statement on the Moabite connection to the line of David, which is supported by the genealogical information included in the concluding verses of the book. Robert Gordis, author of *Love, Marriage, and Business in the Book of Ruth*, after dissecting and examining several of the various positions on the purpose of the book of Ruth concludes, “that the book of Ruth is a story told for its own sake.”¹²

Ruth is a narrative centered on the power and pain of relationships; it is about relationships lost and gained, the relationship between people and the land, and the relationship found between family members – both by blood and by marriage. Ruth communicates lessons about death and rebirth. More importantly, as part of the biblical foundation for the project dealing with women in leadership, the book of Ruth chronicles the story of a mentoring relationship between two women that is based on love, shared faith, and unwavering dedication. The relationships in this book are essential to the story presented to the readers. It is through the relationships recorded within the pages of the text that produces part of the family line, which is traced to Jesus Christ. The foundational relationship of the text is introduced within the first few verses of the first chapter.

In the first chapter of Ruth, the family is introduced; it consists of a father, Elimelech, a mother (Naomi), and their two sons (Mahlon and Chilion). The family originated from Bethlehem, which in Hebrew literally means “House of Bread.” It is ironic that a place with this name would

¹¹ Robert Gordis, “Love, Marriage and Business in the Book of Ruth: A Chapter in Hebrew Customary Law,” *A Light Unto My Path* 2, no. 11 (Fall 1974): 241-64.

¹² Ibid.

experience such a severe famine. Elimelech's family was Ephrathites – Ephrath was an ancient name for Bethlehem. It is possible that this detail was included within the text to signify the depth of the line of Elimelech in Bethlehem, and to symbolize the strength of his family's connection to the culture and the land. This information would help illustrate how devastating the famine and the challenges the family must have experienced when they made the decision to leave Bethlehem and to travel to a foreign place. The text refers to a timeframe in which the land of Bethlehem is experiencing a severe famine. Ruth 1:1 states that the famine occurred "when the judges ruled." Scholars dispute which judge was in power at this time. Some suggest that the famine occurred during the time of Judge Izban, while others believe the historical clues within the text point to the days of the rule of Ehud or Shamgar. Due to the famine, the patriarch of the family, Elimelech, decided to move his family to a foreign land to search for better opportunities and provisions. The family traveled to a land where there was no famine; the family journeyed from their home country to an unknown land in a quest for survival. The country of Moab was located between Ammon and Edom, east of the Dead Sea.

The tense and conflicted history between the people of Israel and Moab is important to consider and understand in light of the challenges that transpired for the Israelites before, during, and after the text. The Israelites encountered the people of Moab several times on their journey to the Promised Land. Before they reached the land of Canaan, they were forced to encounter the Moabites one final time. In the twenty-second chapter of Numbers, the reaction of the Moabite people to the request of the Israelites to pass through their land is recorded. Balak was the king of the Moabites at this time. Numbers 22: 3-4 (NRSV) reveals, "Moab was in great dread of the people because they were so numerous; Moab was overcome with fear of the people of Israel." The text continues by describing how the king chose to hire a prophet to curse the Israelites. When the curse did not work,

Balak tried a different strategy. The Moab women began to intermarry with the men of Israel and introduced them to their gods, which began to pull them away from their own religious beliefs.

“Were it not for the zeal of Phinehas, grandson of Aaron, the whole nation of Israel might have been finished there and then.”¹³ This element of the relationship between Israelite men and Moabite women is essential in developing a better insight of the dynamics presented in Ruth 1.

After arriving in Moab, Elimelech dies and his two sons marry women from Moab. The daughters-in-law are named Orpah and Ruth. The text reveals that after ten years passed, the two sons died. Although, no information is offered concerning how the two brothers died, the meanings of the brothers' names appear to foreshadow the main themes presented within this book. Mahlon is derived from the Hebrew term, which means “weakness or death.” Additionally, the name Chilion comes from the Hebrew word, which means, “finished or spent.” Perhaps the sons' names suggest they were both sickly when they were born. Interestingly enough, their deaths create a potential family hardship, leaving Naomi and her two daughters-in-law in a precarious position. Now, the three women found themselves without any male family members to provide for them. Within Jewish custom and culture, the male members of the family delivered economic support. Without the provision of the male family members, the future for Naomi, Ruth, and Orpah was uncertain. This reality possibly fueled Naomi's decision to leave Moab and return to her homeland. Orpah and Ruth's first response was to remain with their mother-in-law for the journey back to Bethlehem. As they continued in their journey, Naomi determined that it would be best for Orpah and Ruth to return to their families. Ruth 1: 8 (NRSV) states, “Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.” Orpah decided to follow Naomi's advice; then, she returned to Moab. However, Ruth made a different decision. Within her

¹³ James Howell, “Ruth 1: 1-8,” *Interpretation* 51, no. 1 (1997): 283.

response to Naomi, the true depth of Ruth's relationship with her mother-in-law is shared. Ruth resolved to follow Naomi wherever she chose to go – not leaving her side. She declared her commitment to Naomi in Ruth 1: 16-17. "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God..." When Ruth makes this declaration, "many interpreters understand that she is continuing to state her intentions, not what has already happened. Naomi could continue to argue with her, but if Ruth points out that in her opinion she made her choice years ago by marriage."¹⁴

The relationship between Naomi and Ruth is dynamic and empowering. "Naomi is the senior partner – she is older, and the mother-in-law. Ruth is the inferior member of the pair – she is younger and subordinate by status as well as by will to Naomi."¹⁵ There is no background information provided concerning the details of the relationship between these two women before this conversation. However, Ruth's decision and comments in the text reveal her obvious respect and love for Naomi. Naomi offered a mentoring presence for Ruth. Since Naomi had previously lost her husband, Ruth was able to watch Naomi model how to handle such a tremendous period of sorrow and difficulty.

Despite the decision's obvious challenge, Ruth vowed to stay beside Naomi instead of returning to Moab, her native land. The absence of male family members made this a difficult ordeal and decision for them. With no male family members, the women would be forced to complete the journey back to Judah – alone. Then, they would be forced to locate resources on their own, without protection and covering. Additionally, the resolve to stay with Naomi would be demanding because of the two women's cultural differences. Because Ruth was a Moabite, it is safe to assume that she

¹⁴ Robert D. Holmstedt, *Ruth: a Handbook On the Hebrew Text* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2010), 90.

¹⁵ Athalya Brenner, "Female Social Behavior: Two Descriptive Patterns Within the 'birth of the Hero' Paradigm," *Vetus Testamentum* 36, no. 1 (1986): 257-73.

did not believe in the God of Naomi. As previously discussed, the people of Moab observed different religious beliefs than the people of Israel. Within the previously discussed text of Numbers 22, it is discovered that the Moab people worshipped and sacrificed to the god Baal of Peor. Kemesh was the god of the Moabite people and polytheism was the norm of many people in the ancient near East.¹⁶

Despite her religious upbringing, Ruth committed herself to the God of Naomi. It is interesting to note that Ruth had been married for ten years to an Israelite man and lived in an Israelite household; however, before this incident, she had never made a commitment to follow the Israelites' religious customs. Now, she had announced her conversion commitment because of her relationship with Ruth. Of course, one pressing question emerges: What did Ruth see in Naomi that compelled her to make this life-altering decision concerning her faith? The women had obviously experienced challenging times together. In spite of her faith, Naomi dealt with tremendous loss and challenge in her life due to the deaths of her husband and her two sons. Ruth must have observed something exceptional in Naomi, which encouraged her to not only continue to follow her to her Judah, but to follow the God that she served. Consequently, Ruth's respect for Naomi and the mentoring relationship that existed between them positively influenced and increased Ruth's faith. In fact, her faith conversion was remarkable considering the obvious resistance Ruth would encounter from Naomi's homeland, due to Ruth's cultural background. It is safe to assume that she would not be readily welcomed and would need to devote time to learn the customs of her new home. Despite these challenges, she was determined to stay with Naomi. "Ruth and Naomi exemplify friendship, loyalty, and Abrahamic fidelity."¹⁷

¹⁶ Holmstedt, 15.

¹⁷ Joseph Blotz, "Bitterness and Friendship: A Feminist Exegesis of the Book of Ruth," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 32, no. 1 (2005): 47-54.

The basis of the relationship between Naomi and Ruth can be defined with the Hebrew term “hesed.” As defined by Katherine Doob Sakenfeld in her work, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry*, the term “hesed” is “a provision of need; that is not something nice for someone to do, gratuitously or because it expresses special favor; performed by a situationally weaker person by a situationally more powerful person.” The word “hesed” in biblical Hebrew refers to a variety of terms: “goodness, favor, love and most commonly loving kindness. Recently, translators have sought to approximate its essence more closely in the rendering of steadfast love.”¹⁸ The term is used interchangeably in reference to humanity’s relationship with God and with humanity’s relationship with one another. This term is employed when Naomi asks God to grant her daughters-in-law with “hesed,” as they have treated her and their husbands with “hesed.” Ruth displays further examples of “hesed” in her commitment to remain with Naomi as she returns to Judah. “Hesed” creates the basis of this covenant relationship because it focuses on the concept of covenant loyalty. The relationship between Ruth and Naomi revealed a bond deeper than friendship; their connection reflected a divine quality. Old Testament scholar, Walter Bruggemann defines “hesed” as “the tenacious fidelity in a relationship, readiness and resolve to continue to be loyal to those to whom one is bound.”¹⁹ There was a divine alliance between Ruth and Naomi that positively affected both women: Naomi used her wisdom and guidance to mentor Ruth; and Ruth stayed with and remained loyal to Naomi, forever changing their lives and their destinies. Their bond represents an example of the relationship between God and God’s creation. Their mutual love and loyalty for one another triumphs any tragedy they are forced to endure – a testament of the immense love and unwavering loyalty that God shows toward God’s creatures.

¹⁸ Gordis, 242.

¹⁹ Mary Lee Wile, “Elizabeth,” *Daughters of Sarah* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 45-49.

The story of Ruth and Naomi provide significant biblical foundation when examining leadership development among African American women for the local church. Many women initially accept their call within a local church setting. The local church is the symbolic "Bethlehem" or "House of Bread" for those seeking guidance, support and encouragement. The local church is positioned to be an instrument of learning and empowerment for the men and women who are called to be the future leaders of the church. It is through the teaching and preaching of the senior pastor and ministerial leadership of the church that bread is shared. It is through the mentorship and example of veteran church leaders that identity and voice in ministry is shaped. The local church is postured to be the "House of Bread". It is within the walls of the church that ministries are birthed and formed and confidence in gift and ability is shaped. Oftentimes, unfortunately, the place where resource and supply should be found is discovered to be a place of lack and famine. As a result, many women are forced to seek resource and supply outside of Bethlehem.

After departing from the place of famine, because of context and need, some find themselves as Ruth's sons did in the text, connected and married to those that one would have least expected. The text doesn't tell us how long the marriage of Orpah and Ruth to Naomi's two sons lasted. It just provides information for us concerning their death. As previously discussed, their names gave indication that they struggled with weakness and illness their entire lives. Unfortunately, as female clergy seek to find mentorship and support outside their local home church, they also make desperate decisions based on the context where they found themselves. In an attempt to satisfy a desire for connection and relationship, many African American female ministers also find themselves joined together in ministry and relationship with persons and ministries that are unhealthy and weak.

The ideal relationship that provides the needed support, encouragement, and foundation for growth is one that is based in love and devotion modeled by Ruth and Naomi. Naomi was able to provide Ruth an example of great strength while she was struggling with grieving not just the lost of

her husband but both of her children. In addition to the grief, Naomi also had to provide leadership for them as they journeyed back throughout the land in an effort to return back to Bethlehem. Her courage, strength, and faith were exactly what Ruth needed to move her to a deeper connection with God. It didn't matter what she believed in the past. It no longer matter what god she served while living in Moab. She was able to be who God had created and destined her to be because of her relationship with Naomi. In order to adequately prepare women for ministry in the local church, it is important to provide opportunities for women to connect with those who can provide example of faith, and demonstrate what true leadership looks like under challenge and pressure confronted along the journey.

The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called the Son of god. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing is impossible with God. Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her. In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit... (Luke 1: 35-41)

This text comes from the gospel according to Luke, which is frequently referred to as the Third Gospel. Luke, "the beloved physician," is considered the author of this book. Because of the time and emphasis devoted to the stories of Mary and Elizabeth in the first two chapters of the book, some scholars have suggested a female writer may have contributed to this part of the book. Considering the cultural pressures of the time, Luke may have chosen not to acknowledge the female contributor. There are references made to the Gospel of Mark, so many scholars believe this book was written during the last part of the first century. It is not known where this book was written. Luke is the only book in the Bible that includes a detailed account of Mary and Elizabeth's relationship.

The story of these two women begins with the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah being blessed with the pronouncement that regardless of their old age, they would be blessed with a child. The

announcement is first made to Zechariah while he is in the temple conducting his priestly obligations. During the early century, a woman's social standing in society was directly connected to her ability to have children – more specifically male children. The text describes Zechariah and Elizabeth as being advanced in age; so it is safe to assume that their childless status has been a difficult challenge for them to handle within their community. This perspective is further supported by Elizabeth's reaction to her pregnancy, as found in Luke 1:24 (NRSV). "This is the what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorable on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people." Elizabeth is from the priestly line of Aaron. Elizabeth is described in the text as being "righteous" and "living blameless" before God. These attributes assigned to Elizabeth are important because during this period, barrenness was considered to be directly connected to a woman's sinfulness. If a couple was unable to have a child, then it was believed to have been a result of something that the woman had done to offend God. Therefore, Luke makes it a point to highlight the character of Elizabeth in this text to ensure an understanding of her relationship with God.

After Mary received news from the angel that she is going to conceive and carry Jesus, the text reveals that she set out with haste to find her cousin Elizabeth. Scholar Diana Hayes describes Mary this way

...not a symbol of passivity – but courageous and outrageous authority who gives a prophetic yes to God, standing alone yet empowered...a woman attuned to the existential realities of a young Jewish woman living in an empire that had its own quest for power and maintenance of that power at heart, rather than her or any other community's understanding of its own best interests...the experience of Mary's community as a poor and marginalized existence similar to the existence of Blacks in the Church for so long a time.²⁰

Amid the angel's moment of sharing the news with Mary about her pregnancy, the angel told her that her older cousin, Elizabeth was also carrying a child. At the time of the angel's appearance to

²⁰ Karen Baker-Fletcher, *Dancing with God: the Trinity from a Womanist Perspective* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 2006), 42.

Mary, Elizabeth was already six months pregnant. Mary was seeking out her cousin to get confirmation of the blessing of pregnancy that the angel mentioned, and to find encouragement and support for her own situation. Elizabeth was the older family member in this relationship. Mary's decision to search for her cousin once she received the announcement from the angel proves the depth of their relationship. "Because of her faith as well as her pregnancy, Elizabeth is seen as mentor and protector of Mary who went to her for knowledge from an older woman."²¹

The text states that Elizabeth responded to Mary in a "loud voice." The word used for voice in this text is a medical term used for voice that is not used anywhere else in the New Testament. It means to cry or to make an inarticulate utterance. The term used for crying out in this verse is "similar to the phrase that Luke will use of Jesus on the cross crying out with a great voice his testimony of death transformed to life."²² Therefore, Elizabeth did not simply speak loudly when she encountered Mary. There was an inexplicable force and energy behind what she said. She possibly cried out in response to the baby's sudden movement in her womb. Then, she greets Mary with a blessing. The word blessed that is used in her greeting to Mary has a double meaning: Elizabeth is first echoing the words of the angels by confirming to Mary that she is fortunate to have been chosen to be the vehicle through which the Messiah would come into the World. Women, during this time, had the lowest status in society; therefore, their value was connected to their ability to bear children. By God selecting a woman to be the vehicle of the Savior, God is declaring the worth and significance of the woman. God chose to use those whom society overlooked and cast down as a vehicle for salvation. This is especially true in the case of Elizabeth. It is interesting to consider the meaning of Elizabeth's name: "Beth is house. Za suggests gift or life. El is lord. An Elizabeth is the house of the gift of life or life of the Lord in a very homey sense of the home the woman provides of

²¹ Wile, 51.

²² Loretta Dorinsch, "A Woman Reads the Gospel of Luke the Infancy Narratives: Introduction and Luke 1," *Biblical Research* 42, no. 1 (1997): 18.

the child both in the womb and in the nurturing to come.”²³ Elizabeth was an older woman who had never been able to have children. Because of her age it appeared to be biologically impossible for her to conceive and give birth to a child. She was belittled in her community because she was barren. In the patriarchal culture of that day, women were already considered as second-class citizens; but as an infertile woman, Elizabeth’s journey was fraught with trouble. However, when God blessed Elizabeth and Zechariah with a child, God elevated and restored her in society. “Mary and Elizabeth comprise the first examples of the lowly being exalted as part of God’s eschatological reversal.”²⁴

Secondly, Elizabeth acknowledged the blessed presence of the Savior within her cousin’s womb. By recognizing the manifestation of Jesus, Elizabeth positions herself to be the first prophet of the New Testament.²⁵ In fact, she is the first to speak into creation the arrival of Jesus Christ and to celebrate His coming. God restored Elizabeth’s position within her community with her miraculous pregnancy. Through her womb, John the Baptist, the forerunner for Christ, would come into this world. However, God used Elizabeth’s voice to cry out to the world first that the Savior had indeed come. Her importance was not only connected to the one whom she carried in her womb; her significance and purpose were linked to her willingness to use her voice to announce and celebrate Mary’s immaculate conception, and to praise the Holy One whom she carried in her womb. Because of Elizabeth’s faithfulness, Mary was able to celebrate her divine purpose fully. In fact, she spent the most delicate part of her pregnancy (the first three months) with Elizabeth before she returned home.

This text provides scriptural foundation of leadership development for African American female clergy. When an authentic relationship is in place, what’s in a woman reacts. The text tells us in verse 41, when Mary who is pregnant with Jesus enters into the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth,

²³ Dorinsch, 13.

²⁴ Dorinsch, 15.

²⁵ Brenner, 270.

the child is Elizabeth's womb leaps. This couple was found to be blameless before God; true followers of God's commandments but for many years found themselves unable to bear children because Elizabeth was barren. Because of some biological complication and difficulty, Elizabeth was unable to conceive and carry life inside of her. The world's standards labeled her as barren and broken. Society cast her to the side because of her inability to bear a child. In spite of her condition, however, Zechariah and Elizabeth stayed faithful to God. They continued to serve God as God positioned them for a blessing as the people prayed outside the temple on the day Gabriel came to Zechariah in the temple. And now, what Elizabeth was lacking, the place in which she experienced brokenness and miracle, the space that carried her deepest pain and her most heart felt joy, became the entry point of her praise. When Mary who was carrying Christ within her womb came into the room, what Elizabeth carried within her reacted. The very child that she prayed for and sought God after for years; this child was the physical product of all Elizabeth's tears, prayers and petitions to God. When Christ came, what she carried in her reacted and responded. The baby leaped inside of her womb. The Christ – the one who represents New Life and restored relationship; the one who comes to set back right that which had gotten thrown off; the living Word, the one whose coming was foretold by the great prophets of the Old Testament; the bridge, love personified and actualized. When a woman who carries Christ comes, something inside you should react and respond. Through authentic, God directed relationship, women would no longer ignore what was inside of them; what they are carrying inside will make itself know when Jesus is carried within the womb of another that you share authentic relationship with. Christ's presence will speak to what women carry inside of them; the spaces inside your where they experienced both brokenness and miracle; the place where they carried their deepest pain and most heart felt joy; the things that caused them to want draw back from community while at the same grasp tightly to those around them. When Christ is truly carried in the one that a female minister is connected to, something will happen on the inside. The place of life reacts and responds to Christ presence. His presence causes things inside us to leap. Like John in the

womb of Elizabeth, what's inside us can't contain itself. The life inside us leaps when Christ comes. The joy inside us leaps when Christ comes. The love for others even those who have rejected us and caused pain leaps when Christ comes. The giftedness inside of us leaps when Christ comes. The desire to live better leaps inside of us when Christ comes. My visions and dreams leap when Christ comes. When you are on in the presence and acknowledge of the presence of Christ, what's inside should react.

Secondly, when an authentic relationship is in place, what's inside is replete with divine presence. To be replete is the condition of being filled or overcrowded. When Mary enters the home of Elizabeth carrying the Savior of the world in her womb, the text tells us that after she greets Elizabeth, the child in Elizabeth's womb leaped. Verse 41 "And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth – the one that was barren and unable to carry life inside of her. Elizabeth – the woman who was not whole because she was missing something that she desired and prayed for. Elizabeth – the woman who was viewed as incomplete and broken because of her inability to have children. That same Elizabeth when she came into contact with Christ was now filled. What was missing, was now found. What was oncelacking, was now present. What was once empty, was now filled. And she was not just filled with just anything or anybody but the text tells us that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is one of the manifestations of the character of God. If Jesus is the one who came to re-establish broken relationships, then the Holy Spirit is the fire and "uumph" or breath that assists in maintaining the relationship and helping it grow and mature. So, when Elizabeth encountered Christ what was in her reacted and became agitated and then she was filled and overcome with the fire and breath of God. When women of God come together in authentic relationship for the purpose of mentoring and leadership development, something on the inside becomes agitated. And then, they become filled with an unexplainable power; an unexplainable peace, an unexplainable love. They are replete with divine presence. Their very being

is completely overcome, overwhelmed, over crowded by the very presence of God. They become filled with the very presence of God through the Holy Spirit. And because they are filled, there were some things that became overcrowded and pushed out. Salvation arrived and overcrowded stress. Love entered the picture and pushed out lust. Destiny came overwhelms division. Divine presence overcrowded doubt. Faith pushed out fear. Peace took over anxiety. No longer lacking. No longer empty. No longer barren. No longer without. A divine deposit is made within and they are made different.

Lastly, when an authentic relationship is in place, what's inside is released. Elizabeth was so overcome by the weight of the moment when she encountered Mary that day, and she became so overwhelmed and overcome with divine presence, that she had to respond and release what was welling up in her spirit. The text tells us that she exclaimed with a loud cry. She released the joy of the moment. She allowed herself to take all of the emotion and all of the feeling of that moment and release audibly so that all that was near would know what Christ's coming meant to her. She did not keep her joy to herself. She did not hide how she felt about this life changing and life affirming moment. When Christ, Elizabeth allowed what was inside of her to be released. And her release became a blessing to all those around her. In her release, she blessed and praised God. In her release, she affirmed Mary. She affirmed who Mary was called and destined to be. She affirmed her identity and her calling in that moment. Because she was willing to be authentic in that moment, she was able to assist Mary in accepting the divine call and purpose in her life. Because Elizabeth released, Mary was able to release. Her actions became an important turning point in Mary understanding who God had called for her to be and how God was using her to be a carrier of the Living Word. Women who are in ministry must be able to move beyond their own hurts and insecurities, and celebrate and affirm those around them. Because their ability and willingness to release is directly connected to the women who are around them.

Theological Foundation

For many years, men have dominated the voice of the academy involving theological discussion. The understanding of God and how God relates to creation was discussed from a white, male perspective. There was a noticeable absence of the experience from the perspective of people of color; consequently, several forms of thoughts were formed, including Black Theology and Feminist Theology. Black Theology is oftentimes credited to great thinkers like James Cone. According to Dr. Ivan D. Hicks, James Cones was one of the purveyors of the Black Theology movement and is considered one of the most prolific writers on the subject.²⁶ Although Black Theology speaks to the African American experience, it fails to speak completely to the journey and experience of African people throughout history. In fact, it fails the “temporal test” because it draws only from the African American experience from the Civil Rights era to contemporary times. Since God is the God of the oppressed, this question emerges: How did God relate to African Americans before slavery when they were rulers and after oppression ceased? Hicks proposed that African Americans need a theology that is both systematic and chronological. His answer is Afrocentric Theology.

Afrocentric Theology builds upon the academic discipline of Afrocentricity, which is credited to Dr. Molefi Asante. According to Asante, the three basic tenets of Afrocentricity are the following: 1) it must be critical; 2) it must be centered; and 3) Kemet is the cultural reference point.²⁷ Dr. Hicks contends that for true Afrocentric scholarship to be achieved in the area of theology, one must go back further than Kemet as a reference point. In order to critically understand God in relation to humanity, a person must return to the time of creation and use Eden and the God of biblical history as the reference point. Hicks states, “We have to go back before we are able to work our way up.”²⁸ To

²⁶ Ivan Hicks, “Afrocentric Theology” (lecture, Metropolitan Baptist Church, Largo, MD, October 14, 2011).

²⁷ Hicks, 2011.

²⁸ Ibid.

be centered in terms of Afrocentricism, means to recognize that African Americans are not merely the objects of history, but the subjects. As African Americans, they produce the action and are responsible for telling their own story. Additionally, Hicks offers a fourth tenet of Afrocentric orientation that is necessary to this theological application. In order to accomplish critical and centered scholarship, the work that is produced must be a tool of empowerment for the people.²⁹ They do not do the work just to do the work; they do the work so that others can be empowered by what is produced.

Black Theology provided a needed framework to discuss God through the lens of the African American experience in this country. Unfortunately, men again dominated the voice of this academic discipline. Feminist Theology attempted to provide an understanding of God from the perspective of all women. However, because one of the dominant sources for understanding faith and developing theological perspective is experience/story, Feminist Theology was often discussed from the viewpoint of White women. For this reason (and others), many women of color struggled to identify with this school of thought. African American scholar, Jacquelyn Grant began to identify and discuss the challenges and limitations of Feminist Theology's attempts to establish a universal voice for all women and to define the challenge and plight of women with one voice and one story. "We have a tendency to overlook the differences and to talk about our commonalities, but that is problematic because it attempts to move toward reconciliation without liberation."³⁰

The history of the relationship between African American women and White women provides obvious examples of the contrasts that exist in their experiences and stories. Because of the brutal system of slavery, African American women were forced to work for White families while many

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989), 12.

times being under the direct leadership of White women. The experience of White women and African American women, during this period, was extremely different, to say the least. At that time, African American women's sole purpose was to serve the White families by providing free, domestic labor while coping with daily and ruthless physical, emotional, and psychological abuse. This horrific abuse was not only meted out by the White male masters, but the White women, who were also active participants in maintaining the slave master's dominance as evidenced in countless slave narratives, biographies, and autobiographies. While White women were protected by this patriarchal system of slavery and treated as "ladies," African American women were demonized, raped, treated as property, and given a recognition that was lower than animals. "No special and very little different treatment was accorded to slave women because they were women."³¹

After slavery ended, the distinct contrasts between the experiences and stories of White women and African American women lingered. Unfortunately, the foundation of that relationship remained constant – African Americans were the servants, while Whites remained the masters. After African Americans were freed from the constraints of the slave system, many were forced to continue to work in the same labor-intensive occupations, while being underpaid for their work. A majority of African American women in the South continued to provide domestic work for White families while still having to deal with many of the same abuses that defined the slavery experience.

The historical link between African American women and White women is marred by racism and classism. This particular chronicle of events challenged many African American women's efforts to unite in "sisterhood" with White Women by seeking to share their faith experiences.

³¹ Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology (Innovations: African American Religious Thought) (Innovations: African American Religious Thought)* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 2008), 3.

"Many Black women experienced white women as the white supremacist group who most directly exercised power over them, often in a manner far more brutal and more dehumanizing than that of racist White men. (Even) today, despite predominant rule by White supremacist patriarchs, Black women often work in a situation where the immediate supervisor, boss, or authority figure is a White woman."³²

The actual approach of attempting to lump every woman's experience under the umbrella of the White woman's experience is a racist act. Such an effort fails to offer room for the unique voices and experiences emerging from women of color throughout this nation. Each group has a different story that provides a different perspective through which an understanding of God and faith is shaped and formed. In order to provide a more holistic comprehension of faith, these experiences must be communicated.

Since they could not discover their voices within Black Theology and Feminist Theology, African American women continued to search for a way to describe and understand the faith that emerged from their unique experiences. The development of this school of thought was a result of African American female scholars discovering the sexism within the ideals of Black Theology and the racism identified within Feminist Theology. Many believed that one of the main goals of Feminist Theology was for women to be viewed as equal to men; however, the plight and challenge of the African American female experience was so much broader than that one goal. Feminist Theology succeeded in giving voice to the gender discrimination and bias that is found in the sexist, oftentimes patriarchal systems that women are forced to fight against and live within their communities. In a similar manner, Black Theology scholars found an approach to discuss the understanding of faith through the viewpoint of the African American experience. "Black Theology was forged in the crucible of the Civil Rights Movement of the 50's and 60's and really emerged in the aftermath of the

³² Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1995), 96.

assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968. It rode the wave of the Black Church's principal role in the movement while also finding voice in the Black Power movement's critique of reticent and non-concerned Black Churches."³³ However, African American women have a unique story in which racism, sexism, and oftentimes classism all collide. Because of the plight of African American people within this country, many African American women depended upon domestic jobs as their main source of income for many years – especially in the South. As a result, African American women, for many decades, earned a significantly lower income than White women did.

When attempting to give voice to African American women's experience, class is an important factor that remains at the forefront of the discussion. "Black women must do theology out of their tri-dimensional experience of racism/classism/sexism."³⁴ Womanist Theology draws from the concept of the term "womanist," which Alice Walker first used in her work, *In Search of Our Mother's Garden's: Womanist Prose*. For Walker, this term describes the unique plight and challenge of African American women within society. Walker described a need to identify a term that could be used to describe the African American woman's experience. An important factor within any culture is the claim of the power to name and identify itself. Walker understood this need and sought to find the term to define the African American woman's journey. In the preface of this book, she wrote for a chapter that she was writing for the Third World Woman's chapter, "...an advantage of using the term 'womanist', is because within my own culture, I needn't preface it with the word 'Black' (an awkward necessity and a problem I have with the word feminist), since Blackness is implicit in the

³³ McCorn Lester, "Searching for a Common Holy Ground for the African American Community" (lecture, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH, August 22, 2012).

³⁴ Jacquelyn Grant, *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus: Feminist Christology and Womanist Response* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989), nr.

term; just as for white women there is apparently no felt need to preface 'feminist' with the word 'white' since the word 'feminist' is accepted as coming out of the white woman's culture."³⁵

Within the African American culture, it was oftentimes considered negative behavior when a young girl was described as acting too "womanish." This term referred to a young girl who was acting grown for her age; one who would speak out of turn; someone who was outrageous and ignored all boundaries of acceptable behavior. Historically, when this word was used to label a young lady, it was used as a critique and as a precursor for correction. However, Walker, Delores Williams, bell hooks, and other African American intellectuals have purposed to redefine the word and give it new power. Womanist Theology draws from the core concepts presented by Walker in her work concerning the African American woman's journey.

A Womanist, Walker explained, is a woman who declares love for herself as an African American woman and her community. She is concerned about the maintenance and advancement of both. There is a dialectical relationship between the Womanist's particular concern (the advancement of Black women) and the universal concern of humanity as a whole. The two matters do not oppose each other; they are given equal emphasis and energy. One is not more important than the other because for liberation to occur, both concerns must be addressed and offered energy. The Womanist is a woman who knows the power of her own voice and employs her voice to define and speak for herself. She possesses "sass," loves women, and their experiences, and demonstrates her independence and strength as a woman.

Scholar Katie Canon is the first person credited for applying the term "Womanist" to the theology discussion. Along with Delores Williams and Jacquelyn Grant, she provided many of the early writings that sought to discuss the understanding of faith through the unique lens of the African American woman's perspective. All three of these scholars studied at Union Theological Seminary in

³⁵ Grant, 12.

New York and were influenced by Black Theology scholar/professor James Cone and Feminist Theology scholar/professor Beverly Wildung Harrison.³⁶ Womanist Theology attempts to create an inclusive language that enriches theological discussion and awareness. The symbols and language used are drawn from the unique experience of the African American female throughout history into the present day. Within this school of thought, Womanist theologians tend not to draw distinct lines or boundaries between what is considered to be sacred and secular; they seek to find, understand and celebrate the relationship between the two. African American scholar Linda Thomas defines Womanist Theology as “the critical reflection upon Black women’s experience as human beings who are made in the image of God; it affirms and critiques the positive and negative attributes of the church, the African American community and the larger society.”³⁷

Theology is developed from the viewpoint of a person’s individual experience and story. Unfortunately, portions of the historical account of African Americans in this country are difficult to locate due to the brutality and oppressive nature of slavery. Over time, the narrative of the African American experience was captured on pages of history – frequently without the female voice and accounts. In an effort to build a report that provides the foundation for Womanist Theology, scholars pull from a wide variety of sources, including slave narratives, copies of sermons/prayers, fictional and non-fictional literary work throughout history. Within these stories, a better understanding is developed regarding how faith played a role in the African American female story. The struggle to liberate all oppressed women – not just African American women – provides the foundation for this theological thought and serves as the main goal for this story’s development. Womanist Theology is unselfish in its intent because it is concerned with the greater good and freedom for all. Where Black

³⁶ Joan Martin, “From Womanist Theology to Womanist Ethics: The Contribution of Delores S. Williams,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 58, no. 3 (2004): 204.

³⁷ Martin, 204.

Theology maintains the goals of liberation and justice, Womanist Theology includes the goals of survival, quality of life, and wholeness.

One of the key components within the relationship traditions of African American women is passing wisdom and information from the mother to daughter – a type of advice exchange. Mothers have traditionally given their daughters advice about what it means to be a woman in society as it relates to men, childrearing, work, etc. This oral tradition offers essential data for women as they attempt to gain an understanding of God through the perspective of an African American woman's experience. "Female slave narratives, imaginative literature by black women, autobiographies, the work of black women in academic disciplines, and the testimonies of black church women will be authoritative sources for Womanist theologians."³⁸ This tradition becomes imperative to women who have acknowledged a calling into ministry and seek to continue to grow and advance professionally. A necessary component in that growth is building relationships and sharing wisdom and advice with other women (and men).

Walker also emphasizes the importance of drawing her understanding of being a woman from the "non-bourgeois" segment of the community. It is her opinion that poor people operate from a less individualistic position, stressing the importance of community and teamwork more than those in the upper echelon of society do. They share what they have with one another; if one person has something, and then everyone has something. This community awareness focuses on cooperation, instead of competition. One of the key principles of Womanist Theology is community building – no one is excluded from the community based on gender, skin color/shade, class, or sexual orientation. Since community building and maintenance constitute the ultimate goal, every person is valued. "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." Womanist Theology was a response to the need to

³⁸ Williams, 101.

explore and broaden the understanding of the African American female voice when discussing faith and seeking to comprehend God.

A pivotal figure of Womanist Theology is Jesus Christ. African American women can relate to the ministry and crucifixion of Christ because of their own traumatic experiences. In her book, *Making a Way Out of No Way*, Monica Coleman discusses the different views of several Womanist theologians concerning the person and purpose of Jesus Christ in the African American woman's faith experience. Many scholars have debated for years on many facets regarding Christology – from the question of Jesus' humanity versus His divinity to the question of the function of resurrection and salvation. The Bible refers to Jesus by using several different names and titles: He is called "Wonderful Counselor...Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 7:14); Rabboni (John 20:16); "He that should come" (Luke 7:19); Lamb of God (John 1:29)); Saviour (Luke 2:11) to name just a few. Paul Tillich believed that Jesus' purpose was to overcome humanity's disintegrating forces – a triumphant effort that allowed Him to be the Christ. He believed that Jesus was generated by the Father and eternally subordinated to Him. Many scholars presented various images of Jesus Christ and His purpose for being; however, the knowledge of Christ continues to grow and develop as people continue to grow and develop in their faith. For African American women, Jesus becomes a pivotal figure in the awareness of their faith.

No one aspect of Jesus' life is more significant than another. Each part has equal importance in understanding the foundation of Christology. Jesus was born under unique circumstances. Two of the gospel writers chose to pay special attention to the way that Jesus was conceived and born. Many scholars believe that Jesus became the Christ when He was conceived and born to a virgin. This is the incarnation-centered view that places a high value on the birth of Jesus. The way that Jesus came into the world is significant for several reasons: It is important because it establishes the nature and purpose of the Christ's coming. Jesus Christ is described as the Son of God, but the way He entered

creation is not indicative of that title. He was born to a poor carpenter and his wife in an animal stable. By being born in this manner, Jesus Christ begins to reshape the understanding of the relationship of God to humanity in terms of over versus under, superior and inferior, master and servant. Through His birth, Jesus provided the paradigm shift of thinking of God in terms of the One who dwells in the midst of creation so that all may be affirmed and protected.

Womanist Theologian Jacquelyn Grant emphasized the humanity of Jesus Christ when discussing Christology. It was her belief that African American women can identify with Jesus as "sufferer, embracer of the outcast and liberator."³⁹ The brutality that African American women endured during slavery as they were humiliated, treated as property, forced to watch their children ripped from their arms and sold away from them, and enduring indescribable episodes of rape and abuse at the hands of their male and female slave owners is described by Grant as their own personal crucifixion experience. Through these experiences, they can relate to Christ's suffering on the cross. Several Feminist theologians condemn this close identification with Jesus because of His gender. However, Grant contends that Jesus' gender is not an issue because He did not come just to offer salvation to men. He is the Savior of all humanity; therefore, His gender does not negate His importance in the life and faith of women. Additionally, because it is understood that Jesus Christ chose to identify and focus the energy of His ministry on the lowest in society, it would make sense that He would identify with African American women. Because of their experience and journey, African American women constitute the "lowest" in contemporary society.

In the essay, "The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship," Jacquelyn Grant presents a challenge to incorporating "servant language." Although we are all called to be servants of Christ, the term "servant" is actually damaging when viewed through the lens of the African

³⁹ Jacquelyn Grant, "The Sin of Servanthood and the Deliverance of Discipleship," *The Other Side* 30, no. 5 (1994): 36-40.

American female story. Because a significant portion of the story of African American women includes the damaging and demoralizing plight of slavery, which led to spending many years after slavery to work in domestic fields, the term servant invokes a negative reaction and proves useless when understanding faith. Grant proposes that the language of servanthood cannot provide liberation for all, so it should not be included in a theological discussion. Instead, she suggests that African American women should view themselves as disciples instead of servants. "A call to discipleship is to be invited into power and participation in relationship to God and the community of faith."⁴⁰

The knowledge of salvation is extended to not only include eternal life, but to also encompass achieving wholeness and liberation here on Earth. Kelly Brown Douglas views salvation as social and worldly, while focusing on the humanity of Jesus and the work that He accomplished here on Earth. Essentially, Jesus extends an invitation to participate fully in creation – specifically the church and the larger society.

Historical Foundation

The rich history of African American women can be traced to the time of Kemet. During this period, women enjoyed the freedom to operate in leadership positions by exercising their various gifts and talents. There are historical records describing various queens at this time that participated in and provided leadership within the religious context of their time. For example, Neffertiti, wife of Amenhotep IV, is described as consistently making homages to her god without the assistance or leadership of a man to serve as her mediator. This act provided basis for the belief that women could circumvent the male priesthood to worship her god.⁴¹ Another example of ancient African female leadership is Ahmos Nefertere. This Egyptian queen is credited with assisting in the defeat of the

⁴⁰ Grant, *The Sin of Servanthood*, 39.

⁴¹ Ivan Van Sertima, *Black Women in Antiquity* (New Brunswick: Transactional Books, 1988), 7-98.

Hykos and assisting her husband in the restoration of the kingdom of Kemet. In the book, *Black Women in Antiquity*, Ivan Van Sertima described Nefertere as a religious leader and the founder of a "college of priestess."⁴² "Unlike their counterparts in Greek, Roman, and Jewish societies, African women served as partners with men, shaping kingdoms and community life. Women were included in the leadership of ancient African cultures."⁴³ Within ancient African culture, specifically African cave art, women were shown as community and ritual leaders. "The African woman's place was wherever her gifts would take her."⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the role of women in ancient Africa began to shift with the influence of European culture.

The first generation of female religious leaders in America was forced to function as evangelists because of the lack of support and authority granted to them in the mainline African American denominations. Although the churches were frequently funded and supported mainly by female parishioners during the antebellum period, the church leadership roles were reserved solely for men. Women were allowed to participate and assist in church development efforts; but the development of church polity and the role of preacher were reserved for men. "Since the racist and class structures of American society historically has systematically restricted African Americans from entering prestigious occupations, many Black males turned to ministry as a ready vehicle of social mobility within their segregated community. In the process of doing so, they attempted to monopolize positions of leaderships for themselves."⁴⁵ Determined not to be stopped by the opposition and oppression, many women persevered in carving their own paths in ministry and creating their own platforms to exercise their gifts. Much of the early information that is found on

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ McKenzie, 13.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership For African American Women in Ministry* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2011), 35.

female African American preachers is centered on female preachers in the north. Although African American women preached in the south, details about their ministry is extremely limited.

According to Bettye Collier-Thomas' book, *Jesus, Jobs and Justice: African American Women and Religion*, the presence of African American preachers during the Antebellum Era accomplished several goals. Their existence helped to confront the church leadership and clergy of this period regarding their oppressive and exclusionary practices. Secondly, it assisted in challenging the belief of female inferiority. The women's eloquent and informed sermons defied this belief. The African American women who preached and provided leadership during this turbulent era offered an empowering example for women both young and old. They insisted on confronting injustice and oppression, and their tenacity spawned inspiration. Lastly, the African American female preacher often used her platform to speak against slavery and fight against prejudice as a means to seek equality for all people.

The pioneer of African American female preachers is a woman named Elizabeth. Born in the Maryland/Virginia area at the end of the eighteenth century, she began her evangelistic preaching career when she was forty-two years old, and was freed by her final slave owner. She began to hold meetings in Virginia and Maryland. Her preaching ministry took her as far as Canada, where she stayed to dedicate the divine calling in the face of opposition of those who did not feel that women should preach. In her autobiography, *Memoir of Old Elizabeth, A Colored Woman*, she describes the Quaker people as the group that presented her with the warmest reception and most support. Elizabeth established an orphanage for African American youth in Michigan and was dedicated to their care and education.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many African Americans were drawn to the Methodist denomination because of its stand against slavery. Early on, many Methodist churches openly encouraged African Americans to protest separate seating areas in their worship

services. Consequently, their desire to increase their participation and leadership in their faith led to the formation of the African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches. The holiness and sanctification doctrines of the Methodist church validated a woman's right to preach. "Of great importance to enslaved and free women was the Methodist Episcopal Church's espousal of sanctification and holiness. The Methodist belief in the supremacy of God and the Holy Spirit and the accessibility of these principles to all persons regardless of race, color, gender, or class were essential elements in the empowerment of the African American women, particularly enslaved women and early black women preachers."⁴⁶ Many of the first African American women preachers originated from the Methodist tradition, including Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, Julia Foote, and Amanda Berry Smith.

Jarena Lee is known as one of the first African American female ministers. She was born in 1783 in a small town in New Jersey. According to her autobiography, she began to explore her faith at an early age. Her personal exploration led her to join an African Methodist Episcopal in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It was in this ministry that she began using her gifts to influence the lives of others. She worked as an exhorter in her church, which at the time was considered the lowest position in the hierarchy of the church and most often reserved for women. As an exhorter, a person had to get permission to address individual churches and could only speak from the text assigned to them by the presiding minister. Lee decided that being in this position did not satisfy the calling that she had on her life for ministry. She made an appeal to Richard Allen, who was at the time the presiding minister, of Bethel Church in Philadelphia. Allen, who later became a bishop in the AME denomination, declined her request. Lee did not allow the first rejection to dissuade her attempts to fulfill what she considered to be a divine calling on her life. In 1810, she appealed to Bishop Allen

⁴⁶ Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Jesus, Jobs, and Justice: African American Women and Religion* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 11.

again; but her request was declined. However, Allen did give her permission to hold religious meetings in her home. Lee ultimately found success in her appeals to Allen after an incident that occurred during worship service at her church on one Sunday morning. As the assigned minister for the morning was preaching from a text familiar to Lee, she interrupted and began to share with the congregation her own observations of the text. As a result of her sharing her knowledge of the scripture on this occasion, Lee received an endorsement to preach from Bishop Allen. She was not formally ordained; however, she was able to begin preaching and evangelizing wherever and whenever an invitation was extended. The female preachers during this time would “travel from house to house and church to church in their roles as itinerant preachers.”⁴⁷ She used the platform of preaching to not only spread the love of Christ, but also as a platform to speak against the injustices of gender and racial inequalities.

Another pioneer during the early days of African American female preachers is Zilpha Elaw. Elaw was born in 1790 in Pennsylvania, outside of the city of Philadelphia. In her autobiography, she describes an early experience with God at a young age. After being converted to Christianity, she joined the Methodist church where she continued her faith exploration. Unlike Lee, she was not formally connected to a mainline denomination when she started to evangelize and preach. Because she knew that she would never achieve formal endorsement or ordination, she did not want to rebel against authority by staying in a formalized church setting. Therefore, she began to create her own space and took advantage of preaching and sharing the Word of God whenever she was afforded the opportunity. She was close friends with Jarena Lee, and they often traveled together to preach. “As Lee, Foote, and Elaw gained notoriety and were widely praised for their spiritual gifts, clergymen seized the opportunity to utilize their talents and employed them for revivals and other events used to

⁴⁷ Rosetta R. Haynes, *Radical Spiritual Motherhood: Autobiography and Empowerment in Nineteenth-Century African American Women* (New Orleans: Louisiana State Univ Pr, 2011), 2.

attract new members and raise funds.”⁴⁸ The greatest opposition that Elaw faced was in her home with her unsupportive husband. He did not support her decision to preach, and he voiced his opposition of the time she spent in church. Although he attempted to sabotage her efforts to remain in church, he was never successful. Similar to Lee, Elaw used the platform to preach against the evils of slavery. “Upon her husband’s death, Elaw opened a school for Black youth; and she carried her message into slaveholding territory, which included Maryland and Virginia.”⁴⁹ She continued her work of evangelizing and education, and was given the opportunity to visit England on an evangelistic trip. There is no evidence that Elaw ever returned to the states.

Born in 1823, Julia Foote began to face opposition about her preaching from her presiding minister. It was then that she decided to start having worship services in her own home without her minister’s permission. Although her defiance led to her membership being revoked, she continued to offer leadership for a group of women who banded together with her under the common belief of the church being an instrument of sexism and oppression for women. Similar to Elaw, Foote’s husband did not support her ministerial aspirations; but, she resisted his discouragement by fighting him too. “Feisty and spirited, and somewhat younger than Lee and Elaw, Foote was not reluctant to exchange words with figures of authority...”⁵⁰ Although she lacked the support of her church, she preached throughout the northeastern part of the country. She lost her voice and was unable to preach for many years. After regaining her voice years later, she continued to preach and evangelize. In 1894, Foote was the first woman to be ordained as deacon. Then, in 1900, she became the second ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

⁴⁸ Collier-Thomas, 20.

⁴⁹ Haynes, 14.

⁵⁰ Joyce Russell-Robinson, “Defiance and Hope: The Christian Temperament in Nineteenth- Century African-American Women’s Narratives,” *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 22, no. 2 (Spr 995): 29.

Another powerful female preacher was Amanda Berry Smith. On January 23, 1837, Smith was born into slavery in Long Green, Maryland. Her family moved to Pennsylvania while she was a young child, which is where she lived until she got married the first time and moved to New York. During this time, she worked as a domestic servant to make a living. Her first husband, Calvin Devine, died in the Civil War. Then, she married a second time to James Smith. During this marriage, she attended the Mother Bethel African Methodist Church in Philadelphia, where she eventually acknowledged her calling to preach. After her second husband's death, she decided to commit all of her time and energy to preaching and evangelism. Although never formally ordained in the AME Church, she preached in many churches and camp revival meetings. Considered the first African American woman international evangelist, Smith traveled around the world to various countries to spread the Word of God. In fact, Smith spent several years in ministry in England and India. Upon returning to the states, she devoted her time to raising money for and eventually opening an orphanage for African American children. Named the National Evangelist for the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Smith used every available platform to assist her in finding money and support for the orphanage.

In 1898, Sarah Jane Woodson Early became the first African American Woman to serve as the Superintendent of the Colored Division of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Early was the daughter of a free mother and father who lived in a small town in Ohio. The community that she grew up in had a great reverence for education and religion. Early graduated from Oberlin College and became one of the first African American women to obtain a college degree. Later, she became the first African American woman to serve on the faculty of Wilberforce, an African American university. She married Reverend Jordan Early, who was a minister in the African Methodist Church. Because of the struggle of women to find a place in leadership within the traditional church context,

Early created and found leadership space elsewhere. "Religion has served as both a source of black woman's oppression and a resource for their struggles for gender equality and social justice."⁵¹

In addition, many women discovered leadership opportunities in the political or social arena that was grounded and rooted in the Black church. Leadership during this time was not always defined "by formal accomplishments or educational credentials; instead it was defined by being moved by religious faith to take action to address inequalities and injustices."⁵² During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, social and political activism found its roots in women's Baptist and Methodist auxiliaries and women's civic organizations. Frequently, there was an overlap identified between leadership in secular and religious arenas. Shortly after the Civil War ended, in 1896, the National Association of Colored Women was formed and led by Mary Church Terrell. This organization was an interdenominational group where women could "surmount religious and class differences, define and implement a central agenda...effect social change relevant to their feminist/womanist and race agendas."⁵³ By 1900, this organization was recognized as the leading organization for African American women in the United States. Under the leadership of Nannie Helen Burroughs, the Women's Convention of the National Baptist Convention took a strong position against segregation, lynchings, stereotypes of African Americans in the media, and many other forms of inequality throughout this country. Although the civic organizations were oftentimes secular in function, these organizations and leaders were closely affiliated with the church.

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) was another organization that played a pivotal role in the history of African American women in the secular and religious arenas. Founded

⁵¹ Mackenzie, 68.

⁵² Mary Sawyer, "Black Religion and Social Change: Women in Leadership," *Journal of Religious Thought* 47, no. 2 (Wint-Spr 1991): 19.

⁵³ Collier-Thomas, 11.

in 1898, the first division of this organization, the Ladies Christian Association, was started in New York City. It began as an organization run by middle class White females who were united in their Christian belief and desire to provide services and resources to the surrounding communities. This organization was segregated in its programming and practices. In the early 1900s, the organization began to provide funding and support for African American women's chapters. Many African American women found opportunities for leadership within this organization. By 1970, the organization began to address its policies on and beliefs concerning segregation. At that point, the YWCA made the commitment to address racism as its top priority. One of the top leaders in the movement to address racism was Dorothy Height. Height was the president of the YWCA from 1944 to 1977. "No one was more pivotal in this process of directing energies of the YWCA toward racial injustice than Dorothy Height."⁵⁴

The first African American ecumenical organization to be formed was the Fraternal Council of Negro Churches that was organized by African Methodist Episcopal Bishop Reverdy Ransom in 1934. This organization focused on social change and addressed racism. The council was comprised of representatives from sixteen predominantly African American faith communities and six predominantly White faith communities. The executive members of the organization include two women, Belle Hendon and Ida Mae Myller. Nannie Helen Burroughs also served in various capacities within the history of this organization. Additionally, women were permitted to serve in various leadership roles such as chairing major events like the Prayer Pilgrimage in Washington, DC that was held following the historic ruling in *Brown versus the Board of Education*.

The Southern Christian Leadership Council also utilized women in leadership roles during the Civil Rights movement. Under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., the SCLC provided leadership for many demonstrations and protests that provided momentum and direction for the

⁵⁴ Sawyer, 20.

masses during the fight for racial equality and justice. During this time, SCLC was a Baptist dominated organization, which meant that the majority of members were male. Ella Baker served as the first staff director of the organization. Under her leadership, many major projects and decisions were accomplished. Unfortunately, the uniformed and limited belief systems of many of the male leadership led to a change in title for Baker – from staff director to associate director. “Throughout her tenure, Baker had serious philosophical disagreements with King over leadership styles, arguing more for a more participatory and less Baptist model.”⁵⁵

The National Black Evangelical Association was founded in 1963 and placed emphasis on “spirituality and liberation-oriented social change activity.”⁵⁶ One of the founders of this organization was Dessie Webster. Throughout the history of this organization, women have been included in key leadership positions. In 1990, the organization’s board of directors included five women; at that time, a separate commission that dealt specifically with issues for women was established.

In 1967, the National Conference of Black Churchmen was established. The purpose of this organization was to provide an explanation for militancy to White churches and to raise the awareness of the conservative Black clergy that had chosen not to participate in the movement. This organization was led by Gayraud Wilmore and James Cone. Although the organization was mainly comprised of men during its early days, there was a woman, Anna Arnold Hedgeman, who was present during its first official meeting. As the years passed, more women began to join the organization. Yvonne Delk, Ema Ballentine Bryant, Mary Ann Bellinger, Jacquelyn Grant and Thelma Adair all were instrumental in changing the name of the organization from Churchmen to Christians to include women. The National Baptist Women Ministers’ Convention was founded in 1981. This organization was a separate convention that established specifically for women. The

⁵⁵ Haynes, 15.

⁵⁶ Collier-Thomas, 79.

organization has boasted a membership of over 200. In 1990, the organization opened its doors to include a group of Church and God in Christ ordained clergy women.

Throughout history, African American women have had to fight for the right to preach, receive formal endorsements and ordination, and to obtain leadership positions within the formal church settings of mainline denominations. Because of the struggle, African American women throughout history have created their own spaces; they have refused to be silenced by the oppression and sexism of the church and took advantage of opportunities to preach and use their leadership gifts as much as possible. Old Elizabeth, Julia Foote, Zilpha Elaw, and countless others are examples of the unwavering determination and drive that have assisted in paving the way for African American female preachers today. "The unmistakable statement of these women is that if they cannot be preachers, pastors and activists in the patriarchal communions, they will create alternative models of ministry"⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Mackenzie, 98.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This project was birthed as a result of the challenges and experiences of African American female clergy as they exit graduate studies at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. With the current programs, offered by the seminary, there was an opportunity to provide additional gender specific leadership development in order to prepare female seminarians for ministry in the local church. This four-week program was implemented as a leadership development model to provide participants at the seminary with leadership tools not acquired through the academic coursework during their matriculation of the Master of Divinity program.

During the three-year academic program at the School of Theology, students engage in a traditional seminary academic curriculum that includes classes on a variety of subjects such as Biblical Interpretation, Christian Education, Pastoral Care, and Preaching. In addition, all students are required to take a field placement course that includes a paid or non-paid internship at a local church where students can gain practical ministry experience. The internship placement is for one semester during the three-year master's program. Students can pick up additional practical ministry experience through several elective courses centered on Pastoral Care and Counseling. Additionally, there are

opportunities for students to take gender-inclusive elective courses such as Womanist Theology. The curriculum at STVU is gender-inclusive; the faculty intentionally uses gender-neutral language to affirm the gifts of the female students. The dean of the school, John Kinney, models this instructional approach. The following is a message included on the seminary's website to all prospective students:

The Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University is a center of convergence where things come together: head and heart; preparation and praise; church and academy; pulpit and pew; scholarship and spirituality; reflection and action. In this place of intersection, minds are stretched, excellence is pursued, gifts are cultivated and people are transformed. In an environment that feels like family and affirms the intrinsic worth of all, we educate in a manner that fosters a commitment to life-long learning, genuine service, and holistic liberation. We strive to send forth capable and empowered persons who have been inspired by both the acquisition of academic knowledge and skills and a renewed sense of self and spirit. While celebrating our heritage and culture, we seek to serve the world and while honoring traditions, we encourage creativity and unfettered imagination. At STVU, we worship authentically, study diligently, practice faithfully and dream deeply.¹

In the past ten years since the researcher received her Master of Divinity, there have been several attempts to initiate a gender-specific program for female seminarians at STVU. The latest attempt was facilitated by an adjunct faculty member during the fall semester of 2011. Information about this program was obtained through a listening session conducted by the researcher, which will be discussed in greater detail later in this project. An invitation was extended to the female students to attend a session specifically geared to meet their needs on a Saturday afternoon. The students who participated in this session were given an opportunity to share their own stories and struggles of their ministerial journeys with the group. The women concluded the session by spending an extended time in prayer with one another. Although a follow-up session was discussed, the women, unfortunately, did not have an opportunity to meet again.

¹ John Kinney, "Message from the Dean," School of Theology at Virginia Union University, http://www.vuu.edu/samuel_dewitt_proctor_school_of_theology/deans_message.aspx (accessed June 4, 2012).

There were no gender specific opportunities available when the researcher attended seminary. In a class of 30 students that matriculated during the Master of Divinity program, only eight were females. Although the women benefited from the gender-inclusive content of the courses offered, there was no space carved out to deal with issues that they faced as women in ministry. It was through professional relationships with male and female mentors, outside of the seminary experience, that the researcher was able to gain knowledge on practical leadership lessons that prepared her for her first appointment at a local church. Unfortunately, there were additional lessons, accompanied by mistakes and consequences that were learned "on the job." When attempting to address the lack of gender-specific programming, the researcher began to seek and find limited scholarly research on leadership development, specifically for African American female clergy.

"Gender-specific experiences/courses are those that foster confidence and assurance during the growth and development of female clergy."² The researcher hypothesizes through the implementation of a gender-specific program, the self-efficacy of the participants would increase and the female clergy would feel empowered with additional resources for ministry leadership opportunities in the local church. "Perceived self-efficacy pertains to personal action control or agency. People who believe that they can cause events may lead more active and self-determined lives. This 'can do' cognition mirrors a sense of control over one's environment."³ If a person has a high sense of self-efficacy, then he/she feels empowered to conquer any task that is presented. On the contrary, if a person has a low sense of self-efficacy, then he/she may struggle with feelings of low self-worth and low confidence in ability and skill. Using this as a theoretical framework and by

² Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without a Struggle: Leadership For African American Women in Ministry* (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2011), 130.

³ Luszczynska, A., & Schwarzer, R. (2005). Social-cognitive theory. In M. Conner & P. Norman (Eds.), *Predicting health behavior* 2nd ed. rev., (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005), 127-28.

providing and modeling transformative and authentic leadership, the researcher proposes that the African American female clergy would take advantage of this opportunity to develop as leaders.

Early in the research process, when the researcher was attempting to develop her problem statement and process, she was invited to participate in a women clergy luncheon sponsored by a colleague in ministry. The luncheon was part of the hospitality effort for a group of female seminarians from Indianapolis, who were visiting Phoenix as part of a field learning experience sponsored by their school. In an effort to gain more data concerning the research topic, the researcher used time at the luncheon as a listening session. Listening groups offer an opportunity where “people are encouraged to talk to one another; asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others’ experiences and can be used to not only examine what people think, but how they think and why they think that way.”⁴ The researcher posed questions to begin the discussion on the experience of leadership development for the female clergy present. The women were each given an opportunity to share their background information, including their current position in ministry. At the conclusion of the session, the women were presented with an opportunity to complete a survey created by the researcher and to sign up, if interested, for participation in future research projects.

Currently, the students who attend STVU can choose from several different formats to complete their necessary coursework for the Master of Divinity. They can attend classes facilitated in the morning and afternoon hours, Monday through Friday. Students can choose to take courses during non-traditional hours that include evening classes scheduled Monday through Thursday. The final option includes non-traditional hours that are specifically marketed to students who work

⁴ Kitzinger Jeremy, “Qualitative Research: Introducing Focus Groups,” *BMJ* 311 (July 29, 1995): 299-305.

during the week. These students can take classes on the weekend – Friday evenings and Saturday morning and early afternoons. Currently, the majority of students enrolled in the Master of Divinity program take classes during the non-traditional hours (evenings and weekends). Relationship building and sharing is an important component to the gender-specific program. As a result, the researcher made the decision to offer an online program to gain baseline data and feedback on the proposed program. This method proved to be successful as evidenced by the level of participation. With the assistance of seminary staff, an initial email was sent to the female faculty and clergy to invite them to participate in the project. Announcements were made during the community formation and chapel services. Finally, there were flyers posted throughout the campus. Students were asked to confirm their willingness to participate with a designated member of the seminary office staff. This participation confirmation method proved effective because of the staff person's easy accessibility.

Before meeting with the interested female faculty and students, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with several African American females that are currently working in full-time leadership positions in the local church. Interviewing is “a technique of gathering data from humans by asking them questions and getting them to react verbally.”⁵ The women surveyed included females pastors from various denominations and females serving in diverse pastoral staff positions. The women graduated from various seminaries throughout the country, including Duke University, Howard University, and American Baptist Seminary of the West. The interview questions requested background information such as previous and current leadership ministry positions. Additionally, interviewees were asked questions about the role that seminary played in their leadership development and preparation for their current positions. The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. “The purpose of conversion to the written account is to allow detailed

⁵ Donald E. Polkinghorne, “Language and Meaning: Data Collection in Qualitative Research,” *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52, no. 2 (2005): 137-45.

and to-and-fro reading required in the analysis of qualitative data.”⁶ One hundred percent of the clergy interviewed believed there was an opportunity for seminaries to provide gender-specific leadership development programming/courses.

The next step in the process for the researcher was to conduct a listening group and survey current female seminarians and faculty at STVU. After several failed attempts to secure location and time for the group, the researcher was successful in confirming a space and date at the School of Theology. A follow up reminder email was sent to the students and staff who had previously confirmed their participation. In addition, reminder flyers confirming location and time were displayed around the seminary campus. During the session with staff and students, the researcher shared her personal ministry testimony and information about her doctoral project. The students and staff were given an opportunity to share information about their own ministry journeys and the role that seminary has played in their development as future leaders in the local church. At the end of the session, the students completed a survey and offered opportunities to participate in future research efforts.

The STVU sponsors an annual alumni luncheon during the Hampton’s Ministers’ Conference. The researcher secured permission from the dean of the seminary to gather data during the 2012 luncheon event. The researcher distributed surveys to all female seminarians that attended the luncheon with the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the role that seminary played in their leadership development. The information gathered and extracted from the surveys directly influenced and assisted the researcher in developing the curriculum for the leadership development program.

⁶ Ibid.

The researcher determined that the qualitative research design provided the best method to address the identified problem. "Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. They use interpretive inquiry in which researchers make an interpretation of why they see, hear, and understand."⁷ Qualitative research is inquiry aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives. Researchers using qualitative methods gather data that serve as evidence for their distilled descriptions. Qualitative data are gathered primarily in the form of spoken or written language rather than in form of numbers. Possible data sources are interviews with participants, observations, documents and artifacts. The data are usually transformed into written text for analytic use. Selection of interview participants requires purposive and iterative strategies. Production of interview data requires awareness of the complexity of self-reports and the relation between experience and language expression.⁸

The researcher chose to use the qualitative research method because she is seeking to establish a greater understanding of the problem facing African American female seminarians. In order to establish the validity of the data collected, the researcher used the method of triangulation to gather data from multiple sources. The data sources included data gathered through listening sessions/focus groups, interviewing key informants, and surveys and questionnaires. This method assists in "building a coherent justification of themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding validity to the study."⁹

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), 173-201.

Credibility is another imperative component in gathering data in a qualitative research method. The researcher used the peer debriefing process utilized by her professional associates when developing surveys and questionnaires that were utilized throughout the implementation of this project. The peer debriefing process is a “process involving locating a person who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher.”¹⁰

The research model was designed with the intention of establishing transferability. Transferability “refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings.”¹¹ By collecting data from multiple data sources and thereby establishing a broader understanding of the problem, this model would be applicable and effective not just at the School of Theology at Virginia Union, but other seminaries throughout the country.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

FIELD EXPERIENCE

During the fall of 2010, the researcher had an opportunity to facilitate a focus group with a group of female seminarians. Sixteen women attended the luncheon and participated in the discussion, which focused on the plight and challenges of women in the ministry profession. As part of the focus group process, each woman was asked to complete a brief survey to assist the researcher in gaining demographic data for each participant. The women ranged in age from twenty-eight to over forty; a majority of the women were over the age of forty (81% of the participants). They represented a variety of denominations, including United Methodist and Disciples of Christ. Additionally, there was a participant that was a Quaker and one who worshipped at a non-denominational church. Several women were students at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana, and they were visiting a church in Phoenix, Arizona as part of their seminary studies.

Based on the information gathered in the survey, the researcher discovered over 81% of the participants earned at a least a master's degree; one person had earned a Doctorate in Divinity. Of the 16 participants, 25% were from suburban congregations; 12.5% were from rural congregations and the remaining 62.5% were from an urban congregation. As previously stated, there were various denominations represented in the group but a majority of the women identified themselves as being Baptist. A majority of the women were licensed (69%) with a small percentage being ordained (25%).

Table 2. Clergy Women Ministry Survey

Age	Education	Denomination	License	Ordained	Location
40+	BA	Baptist	No	No	Urban
40+	BA, MBA, Mdiv	Baptist	Yes	No	Suburban
28-32	MSW	Baptist	No	No	Urban
28 -33	BA	Baptist	No	No	Urban
40+	Some college	Baptist	Yes	No	Urban
40+	Mdiv	Baptist	Yes	Yes	Urban
40 +	BA, Mdiv	United Meth	Yes	No	Rural
40 +	Mdiv	Baptist	Yes	No	Suburban
40+	BA, Mdiv	Quaker	n/a	Yes	Rural
40 +	Masters in Clinical Pastoral Counseling	Baptist	Yes	No	Urban
28 -32	MEd	Baptist	No	No	Urban
40+	M Pastoral and Youth Ministry	Baptist	Yes	No	Urban
40 +	BA, Mdiv	Disciples of Christ	No	no	Suburban
40 +	BA	Disciples of Christ	No	no	Suburban
33 – 40	BA	Baptist	Yes	yes	Urban
40 +	MEd	Baptist	Yes	no	Urban
40 +	MTh, Ddiv	Baptist	Yes	yes	Urban
33-40	VA, MEd, Mdiv	non-denom	Yes	no	Suburban

The participants were asked to provide information on the length of time they have served in ministry; 38% have been in ministry for over ten years; 37.5% between five to ten years, with the remaining women reporting under five years of ministerial experience. There were two women in attendance that reported recently accepting their call into ministry and had been serving for less than one year. There were three pastors in the focus group, with two women reporting having planted or started their current church and the remaining pastor having been selected or called by their congregation.

The level of pastoral training varied among the group. There were only four women (25%) who reported having no formal training. Of the 16 participants, over 62% reported having some level of seminary training. Additionally, 50% had received formal ministerial training from their church under the direction of their senior pastor. The length of time for the ministerial training ranged from six months to two years. When asked to identify the level of current professional support, specifically as it related to their leadership development, almost half of the participants (44%) reported their current senior pastor as being a supportive resource. The one participant who served in the United Methodist Church identified a peer support group as being her greatest source of professional support for her development. Likewise, the pastor from the Quaker denomination identified a women clergy group as the base of her support.

Table 3. Clergy Women Identify Position, Level of Training, and Ministry Support

Years in Ministry	Position	Training	Support
10+	Music Ministry	None	None
5 to 10	Volunteer	seminary/pastoral	associate min in and out
1 to 5	Volunteer	no training	Senior pastor; assoc in and out
1 to 5	Volunteer	no training	SP; Assoc in
less 1 yr	Volunteer	pastor led	SP, Assoc in and out
10+	Full Time Paid	Seminary	Assoc in and out
10 +	Pastor	Pastor led/Seminary	Assoc out/Women Clergy Group
10+	Part Time Paid	Pastor led/Seminary	SP; Assoc in
5 to 10	Pastor	Seminary	Peer Support Group
5 to 10	Volunteer	Seminary	Assoc in context
Less 1 yr	None	None	SP; Assoc in
5 to 10	Volunteer	Seminary	Assoc in context
1 to 5	Volunteer	Seminary	SP, Assoc out
1 to 5	Volunteer	Seminary	Assoc out
5 to 10	Volunteer	pastor led	Assoc in context
10+	Volunteer	Pastor led	None
10+	Pastor	Pastor led Seminary	
5 to 10	Volunteer	Pastor led/Seminary	

Although a majority of the women reported having post-baccalaureate degrees, they did not achieve the same level of achievement in obtaining professional credentials, according to the data. Although a majority of the women was licensed, they did not report, in great numbers, obtaining their ordination. This data is also significant in relation to the age and experience of the participants. Over half of the participants reported having over five years of ministerial experience with an overwhelming majority being over the age of forty. Additionally, it is significant to note again that two of the three participating women pastors planted their churches. In other words, they created their own leadership opportunities.

During the focus group, the researcher shared information concerning the core of this research project. As a way to begin the conversation and to set the tone and expectation of future sharing, the researcher shared information concerning her professional journey. After answering several questions from the participants, the women were given an opportunity to reveal their personal stories concerning their professional ministry journeys as women. Specifically, they were asked about the seminary's role in their development. The women's responses reflected several interwoven, consistent themes: lack of professional support or networking opportunities, desire for ordination with uncertainty of process, challenges with sexism and feelings of hopelessness, and the desire for additional opportunities for fellowship and sharing with other female clergy.

At the end of the focus group, the women completed the survey, which offered them an opportunity to sign up for future participation in the research project. Of the 16 participants, 100% agreed to participate and furnished their contact information, which included their email addresses and questions about their access to online resources/social networking media for potential online learning and sharing opportunities (i.e., Facebook and Skype).

The next step in the research process involved conducting interviews with African American female clergy, who have completed seminary and who are currently working in full-time ministry. Invitations to participate were extended to 20 women throughout the country by email and through phone calls (see Appendix D). Unfortunately, a majority of the women contacted did not respond. However, six women confirmed and completed the interviewing process. The women interviewed were Dr. Jasmin Sculark, Senior Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in York, PA; Pastor LaTonya Agard, Senior Pastor of Bazzel Creek Missionary Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC; Pastor Kimberly Ridley, Senior Pastor of The Light Community Church of Richmond, VA; Dr. Gloria Miller, Assistant Pastor of First Baptist Glenarden in Upper Marlboro, MD; Reverend Brianna Parker, Minister of Assimilation at Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, TX; and Reverend Monique Williams, Associate Minister of Canaan Baptist Church in Mesa, Arizona. Several women were unable to secure time to complete a Skype or phone interview, so they requested a copy of the interview questions by email to complete.

One consistent theme in the completed interviews centered on mentors and influential persons who had an impact on the leadership development of the interviewees. Each interviewee was able to provide names of several mentors who had a positive impact on their ministry. The list included past seminary professors and pastors. In addition to names, the female leaders were able to deliver narrative information on the encouragement and support they received. As a result of this support, the leaders described feelings of increased self-efficacy and self-confidence.

Another consistent theme in the data gathered during the interviewing process related to experience and challenges in seminary. Each woman shared descriptive information concerning the struggle to build professional networking groups with male colleagues. Each interviewee expressed a common belief that the seminaries need to attempt to provide gender-specific programming and support for female seminarians to assist with the transition into the professional world of ministry.

The next step in the research process involved meeting with current female seminary students at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology. Nineteen women participated in the session that was facilitated by the researcher in one of the classrooms on campus. A majority of the students were entering into their second or third year of their Masters of Divinity programs, (89%) with nearly the same percentage reporting their reason for attending seminary was to prepare to enter into the ministry profession. Only four of the 19 participants were currently working in ministry either part-time or full-time.

Table 4. Rationale Regarding Masters of Divinity

Year of Program	Reason for MDiv	Current Work	Seminary Prep
2	Other	Part Time	Yes
1	Prep for Prof	Full Time	Yes
3	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
2	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
3	Prep for Acad/Prof	Full Time	Yes
2	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
3	Prep for Acad/Prof	None	Yes
2	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
1	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
1	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
3	Other	None	Yes
3	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
3	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
3	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
2	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
1	Prep for Prof	None	Yes
2	Other	None	Yes
2	Prep for Prof	Part Time	Yes
3	Prep for Prof	None	Yes

There were common themes revealed during the data analysis of the open-ended questions posed to the participants regarding the anticipated role of seminary education as they transition into the ministry profession. The most common theme centered around professional development for specialized clergy roles such as chaplains, pastoral counselors, and Christian Education. It is important to note that preparation for chaplaincy was the most common goal with chaplaincy not

traditionally being in the local church setting. There were only two women out of the 19 participants who expressed a desire to use their seminary education to prepare for pastoral ministry. Additionally, several women expressed the desire for their seminary education to assist them in their personal spiritual growth and theological development.

The participants were asked to list additional classes or topics that they believed would be helpful to their professional development. The women listed a variety of topics but several themes came up repeatedly. There was an expressed need for more classes centered on counseling and pastoral care. Within the current curriculum, students are only required to take one year of pastoral care coursework to obtain their Master of Divinity. Periodically, there are counseling elective classes offered; but the women expressed the desire for more opportunities to develop counseling tools and techniques. More specifically, participants listed a desire for more learning opportunities in preparation for chaplaincy work. One could assume, based on the data provided, that a majority of the participants were preparing for a position in the counseling/chaplaincy field.

For the current seminary students, there was an expressed belief regarding the existence of external and internal forces that challenge women's ability to move into full time ministry after completing seminary. The external forces identified by the female seminarians include, but are not limited to sexism, stereotypical gender roles that are reinforced within the church, and the "good ol' boy" network that is oftentimes closed off to women. These women also expressed a concern about the lack of pastoral and staff opportunities and an uncertainty of where to locate ministerial job posting information. The women recognized internal forces as the fear of failure, the terror of rejection, and not feeling appreciated or accepted. Women listed as many internal roadblocks as external difficulties.

Table 5. Anticipated Role of Seminary Education for Current Seminary Students

Anticipated role of seminary education	Already pastoring; preparation for preaching; preparation for counseling and prison ministry; help me in whatever God has planned for my future; help develop a foundation for ministry in teaching/media ministry; pastoral care; staff chaplain; to acquaint me with the historical and theological foundations as I develop in knowledge of the work of the kingdom; to educate youth; prep for counseling family and marriage; pastoral care and counseling; requirement for chaplaincy positions; preparation for hospital chaplaincy; help fulfill qualifications for ordination; preparation for ministry in a church
Additional Helpful Topics/Classes	Preaching, Ministering to Incarcerated, Pastoral Care/Counseling, CPE, Missions/Evangelism, Women in Ministry, Women in Ministry, Pastoral Care, Family and Marriage Counseling, Women in Ministry, Effective Communication; Ministry to Teenage Girls; Pastoral Care and Counseling; Chaplaincy Classes; Women in Ministry; women in ministry concentrating on health and spirituality; Ministry to a Sexually Diverse Community; Psychology Courses
Why more women don't move into ministry after seminary?	Too few opportunities; don't know; Stereotypical thoughts concerning women; not a part of the "good ol' boys club"; not given an opportunity; Fear; no opportunity; male privilege; lack of support; time commitment; not being accepted or appreciated; lack of being continued education; preconceived notions and idea that ministry can only be done by men; society's overall attitude that men are superior to women; women don't trust themselves to move forward; male dominance; women do not have the networking opportunities men do while attending seminary; men have leadership roles – the roles women have do not allow them to give other women opportunity; fear of few opportunities therefore they flee and pursue other careers or vocations; not sure; The opportunities are slim. Men are more

<p>easily able to move into full-time paid positions that will provide for their financial needs. Women are less likely to be offered these positions; Limited opportunities due to male chauvinist tendencies.</p>

Twenty-six alumni completed the survey facilitated by the researcher either at the alumni luncheon or by accessing the survey material online on Survey Monkey. The group reflected a mix of seminarians – women who had graduated over 10 years ago and women who had obtained their degree in May 2012. Over 46% of the women surveyed graduated from the School of Theology over seven years ago with the remaining 54% having graduated between one to six years ago. Seven of the women also held advanced doctoral degrees in addition to their Master of Divinity degrees. Five of the 26 received additional master degrees in various fields. When asked to specify the reason for pursuing a Master of Divinity degree, the group's overall consensus emphasized the preparation for professional and ministry opportunity. Whereas 100% of current seminary students expressed a belief that their seminary education would prepare them to enter into professional ministry, 23% of the alumni seminarians stated that seminary **did not** prepare them to enter into professional ministry. Only three women reported working in a full-time ministry position, while 42% of the alumni reported working in part-time ministry.

Table 6. Seminary Alumni Survey Results

Educational Level	Grad Year	Reason	Working	Prepare
M Div	7-10	Professional	None	Y
M Div	10+	Professional	PT/FT	Y
M Div	1-3	Academic/Prof	None	Y
M Ed/PhD	1-3	Academic/Prof	None	Y
M Div	1-3	Academic/Prof	PT	Y
M Div	4-6	Professional	None	Y
MA/DMin	10+	Professional	FT	Y
MDiv/DMin	10+	Academic/Prof	PT	Y
MA/DMin	7-10	Academic/Prof	FT	Y
MDiv	1-3	Academic	None	Y
MDiv	10+	Academic/Other	PT	Y
MDiv	7-10	Professional/Other	PT	Y
MChEd/EdD	10+	Academic	PT	N
MEd/DMin	10+	Professional	PT	Y
MDiv	1-3	Academic/Prof	PT/FT	N
MDiv	1-3	Professional	None	Y
MDiv/DMin	10+	Professional	None	Y
MDiv	1-3	Academic/Prof	None	N
MDiv	1-3	Professional	None	Y
MDiv	1-3	Professional	None	Y
MDiv	10+	Professional	PT/FT	Y
MA	10+	Academic/Prof	None	N
MDiv	1-3	Professional	FT	Y
MDiv	4-6	Professional	PT	Y
Med	10+	Academic/Prof	None	N
MA	4-6	Professional	PT/FT	Y

Then, the alumni were asked to list the classes they considered the most helpful in defining and developing the specifics of their service for ministry. The women listed a variety of classes with Systematic Theology/Womanist Theology and biblical interpretation courses such as Old and New Testament, which were mentioned repeatedly. Another course several alumni mentioned was Pastoral Care and Counseling. This information is consistent with the data provided by the current students regarding what they considered to be the most helpful seminary courses.

When asked to provide suggestions on topics/classes that would assist women in moving from seminary education to ministry in the local church, a significant number of alumni suggested offering instruction on ministerial resume development and understanding the pastoral candidacy process. In analyzing the data provided, specifically in response to the open-ended survey questions, the researcher noted that several participants either skipped questions or provided limited information. However, 100% of the women surveyed answered this question. Other suggestions included Ministerial Etiquette, Mentorship Opportunities, and Networking.

The final survey question for the seminary alumni focused on a full-time or part-time ministry position: Why do you believe more women do not move into full-time ministry after completing seminary? Similar to the answers provided by the current seminarians, the alumni provided a balanced perspective of the internal and external obstacles women face. Many of them referred to the “glass ceiling” and the gender role stereotypes churches perpetuate, specifically concerning leadership. One participant wrote: “Some churches still struggle with seeing women in leadership roles instead of men. Women are only viewed as helpmates.” Several participants pointed to fear and hesitancy as major barriers for women. Similar to current student data, participants listed lack of opportunity as a challenge. One alumna advanced this concern a step further by identifying “perception of lack of opportunity” as a hindrance because when women do not believe there are opportunities available for them, they do not make the effort to search.

Table 7. Preferred Seminary Classes Identified

Seminary Classes Considered Helpful	Old Testament, Preaching, Systematic Theology, Pastoral Care, NT, OT, Preaching, Women In Ministry, Preaching, History of Christianity, Ethics, Ethics, Preaching, Church History, Christian Ed, Preaching, Church Admin, Systematic Theo, Developing Urban Ministries, OT, NT, Pastoral Care, Systematic Theology, Christian Ed, Womanist Theology, Ethics, Church Admin, Preaching, Women in Ministry, Ethics, Pastoral Care, Church Admin, Systematic Theo, Pastoral Care, Epistles of Paul, Christian Ed, Pastoral Care, Faith and Human Development, Ethics, Systematic Theology, Church History, Field Education, Church Administration, Pastoral Care, Senior Seminar, Field Placement, Womanist Theology, Preaching, Church Administration
Additional Learning Opportunities and Exposure	Working in the Second Chair (Associate Ministry); Serving in the Second Chair; Pastoral Candidacy Process, Ministerial Resume Development, Pastoral Candidacy Process, Ministerial Resume Development, Preparing for the Pastorate, Mentorship, Women in Ministry, Ministerial Etiquette, Do's and Don'ts, Preparation for Candidacy, Pastoral Care, Ministry and Mission, Counseling, Ministerial Resume Development, Opportunities into Law/Politics, CPE, Playing the Game in a Male Dominated Field (Ministry for Women – The Real Deal); Pastoral Candidacy Process; Ministerial Resume Development
Why more women do not move into full-time ministry?	Hesitation and Discrimination; women need to start applying for open pastoral positions; women believe they will be rejected. Women must push open the mind of churches; the attitude of Black Church – some still think women are not leadership material but can only be a “helpmate”; the reality of the glass ceiling; the division of gender roles is still persistent; Women at

	churches don't make it easy for female leaders; limited opportunities; perception of limited opportunity; opportunities are not offered to them; male dominated world of ministry; opportunities are not made available readily to women as they are to men; male leaders who don't believe that women are supposed to be in ministry; women get comfortable in their home churches; fear of rejection; lack of support; not made aware of available ministry opportunities; lack of networking; lack of opportunities; lack of acceptance; lack of opportunity; repayment of loans – pressing need to find full time employment often in secular jobs; full time ministry does not often pay enough; male sexism – hindrance of promotion; lack of support by men and women in leadership; inability to play the game field and the lack of knowledge of what are of ministry that God has called; women are looked over if not through by the predominantly male field; the church still struggles with the idea of women in leadership
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After analyzing the data collected from the listening group, the interviews, the focus group with seminary students, and the surveys collected at the seminary alumni luncheon, the researcher utilized the information to develop the content for the leadership development model. The researcher extracted the consistent themes present in the data to develop a curriculum. The curriculum is divided into the following four modules:

Module 1 – Sharpening Tools: Developing an Effective Ministerial Resume

This module will assist seminarians in developing an effective ministerial resume that will be useful to them as they seek employment opportunities within the local church. Students will be able to view examples of different resume packets. Within this module, students will also gain an understanding of the elements of the curriculum vita.

Module 2 – The Power of Networking and Mentorship

This module is designed to help female seminarians acquire knowledge about how to build and maintain effective, healthy, and professional relationships with male and female colleagues; additionally, the students will learn to identify and comprehend the importance of having mentors in ministry who empower and support them.

Module 3 – Ministerial Etiquette

This module will promote students' awareness of the gender dynamics and demands of being a female in ministry. It will include related topics such as pulpit etiquette, as well as the challenges and blessings of working with men (as a leader, a colleague, and/or a staff minister).

Module 4 – The Understanding: Who God Created You to Be

This module will address issues of fear and uncertainty that many women struggle with as it relates to ministry; students will examine their calling to ministry, and then specifically list and identify goals after seminary.

Information for the modules was sent electronically to the female seminarians that agreed to participate in future involvement in the project. The students were given a week to review the material, and then return feedback to the researcher. Seven students responded with feedback based on their review of the material. The following feedback was received:

- This information would be helpful to all students (including men) as we prepare for ministry opportunities after seminary.
- Great topics; can't wait to learn more.
- Looking forward to working with you in the future and learning how to put together my resume.
- Like the topics; can't wait to see where this goes.
- These would be great topics for a class; I think that alot of women would be interested in them.

CHAPTER 6

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

During the initial stages of this project, the researcher was uncertain about pursuing the subject of women in ministry. The researcher has always been hesitant about pursuing anything focused solely on gender. Navigating through a professional field that is dominated by men is complex. During seminary, the researcher was often asked to speak on behalf of women; she was constantly invited to preach at women's day worship services and women's conferences. In an effort to fight against being limited to only gender-specific church events, the researcher would constantly express her disappointment when invited to these types of functions. It became a running joke with her colleagues – everyone knew not to invite her to a women's day event. The researcher wanted to make sure that she was known as a good preacher – not a good woman preacher. Consequently, in her effort to fit in, the researcher sacrificed celebrating a huge part of whom God created her to be – a woman.

The context of the project shifted as the researcher moved from living in Phoenix, Arizona to Richmond, Virginia. In Phoenix, the researcher pastored a church where the entire ministerial staff was comprised of females. As a leader, it was a priority for the researcher to mentor her ministers and assist them in developing their gifts and abilities. During a conversation with two of the female staff

ministers, the idea for this project was confirmed. Both women had been in ministry for over ten years. One was a graduate from an Ivy League university with a Master of Divinity and was currently completing coursework on a doctorate. The other minister had over twenty years in ministry and three degrees, including a Doctorate in Education. They both had achieved a level of success academically and in their professional, secular pursuits. Unfortunately, neither had experienced the same level of success in their ministerial journey. The feelings that they expressed echoed the researcher's personal sentiments during seasons of her ministry journey – discouragement, frustration, sadness, and hopelessness. Therefore, the researcher felt compelled to use this work to provide more resources for African American female clergy.

The original intent and goal of this work was to create a leadership development model for African American female clergy. It was the researcher's belief that more could be done in the area of gender-specific leadership development to assist women in their transition into leadership roles within the local church. Although many churches have implemented ministerial training programs for their clergy to enroll in as they prepare for licensing/ordination, there are still countless women who do not advance beyond this point of development. The numbers of females attending and completing advanced degrees in theological fields continue to increase. However, the numbers in leadership in the local churches are not increasing at the same rate. Many factors contribute to this problem; however, they cannot be adequately addressed in one doctoral project. However, the researcher sought to find a method to provide additional tools for women.

Although the researcher moved away from her church ministry during fall of 2011, the transferability of the project made it easy to discover a new context to complete the work. The challenges of African American female clergy are not limited by the borders of any specific locations. The researcher's seminary experience played a monumental role in developing her identity as a

minister. During her seminary years, she began to understand the power of her own voice and appreciated the unique way that God created her gift. The project began with a broad focus of African American female clergy. Then, the context shift required the focus to be narrowed to African American female clergy seminarians. Upon returning to Richmond, Virginia, the researcher approached the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University about completing her project there. The school was receptive to the idea and offered to assist and support the researcher's efforts.

Initially, the researcher viewed this shift in context as a negative occurrence because she had expended a great deal of time and effort on the previous research context. The implementation of the project seemed easy to facilitate with the context being the church where the researcher was pastor. Transitioning her project to work in a higher education context would add a layer of logistics and bureaucracy that would not have been present within the church context. However, after examining the benefits of the seminary context, the researcher experienced an epiphany, which led to a shift in her thinking. The seminary context assisted the researcher in narrowing her focus and guided her implementation.

With this new focus of purpose, the researcher felt energized by the prospect of being able to influence and enhance the journey of numerous female seminarians. With this shift of context, the impact of the project would be far greater than originally anticipated. The ministerial staff of the researcher's church was comprised of three women; the seminary's female population was comprised of hundreds of women. Although the project's implementation had to change, the project's potential for greater impact was an immense motivator for the researcher.

The research portion of the project was arduous. Early on, it became obvious that there was no significant amount of scholarly work conducted in the field of African American female clergy development. The researcher was able to locate journal articles and books centered on female clergy, but very few specifically centered on the unique experience of African American female clergy. The researcher found several books that were geared toward practical application tips for female clergy. Unfortunately, many of these publications did not include a theoretical foundation. The researcher discovered books and articles written from a theoretical perspective, specifically based upon Womanist Theology. It was the researcher's hope to find works that were balanced with practical and theoretical information. The one book that appeared to fit this description proved to be a valuable resource to this project – Dr. Vashti McKenzie's book, *Not Without A Struggle*. It was even more difficult to find research that had been conducted concerning the role of seminary in the leadership development of African American female seminarians. Because seminary education began to grow in popularity during the past forty years, there has been minimal research done.

The researcher did not anticipate the feelings that she would experience during the implementation of this project. The subject of female clergy development was important to her because of her own ministerial journey. After completing seminary, there were moments when the researcher experienced both triumphs and challenges as she moved into full-time professional ministry. Throughout her life, there were mentors that took the time and effort to pour into her purpose by providing her with guidance as she navigated through the unfamiliar terrain of full-time work within the local church. The toughest season for her professionally happened years ago so the researcher did not anticipate the feelings that resurfaced during the realization of this project. As she read case studies and interviews with other female clergy, she could not help but identify with the feelings of hopelessness, discouragement, insecurity, and fear of rejection. There were times during the data collection process of her project and the survey facilitation when it was disheartening for her

to view the statistics and the data concerning female clergy leadership: the number of women pastors or staff ministers by denomination, how many women move into careers, other than ministry after seminary, the reasons women do not move into leadership in local churches. The data and the statistics paint a very dismal, but realistic picture. Gratefully, these feelings inspired the researcher to create a model that would assist the women coming behind her.

There were unexpected difficulties that emerged during the implementation of the project, including a shift in context. When the researcher moved out of state and away from her church, it was unclear how the project would move forward. The shift to complete the work at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology was amazing; however, it delivered a new set of concerns. During this period, the seminary was also experiencing a transitional season. A key staff person, who had previously assisted the researcher with logistics, accepted a ministry assignment out of the county during the beginning of the spring semester. It became challenging to confirm logistics regarding meeting times and locations. However, once a new person was in place, communication began to flow easily again, and the project began to move forward.

It was empowering for the researcher to conduct this project at the seminary, where she matriculated for her Master of Divinity degree. Part of the foundational framework of her project was to examine the seminary's mission statement closely. The researcher soon realized that during the three years she attended STVU, she had never seen the school's mission statement. When she spoke to the different focus groups, she began each session by reading the seminary's mission statement. Additionally, the mission statement for the seminary was clearly printed and visible at the top of each survey instrument for the project. In an effort to focus research efforts, the researcher specifically concentrated on the following portion of the mission: to assist students in defining and developing the specifics of their services in ministry. Similar to the researcher's experience, none of the women had

read the mission statement before. It is unfortunate that more time and attention are not devoted to a review of the mission statement of the institution, which serves such an important role in a person's ministry development.

There were unique challenges during this project's execution that required the researcher to shift her approach. With the administration shift at the school, there was a significant amount of valuable time lost during the originally scheduled time for implementation – the spring semester. As previously stated, the seminary has students who attend classes during the traditional hours, Day program, and students who attend during the non-traditional hours, Weekend/Evening program. The original program implementation plan was focused on the Day students. Traditionally, the Day students are full-time graduate students, who do not work full-time jobs and have more flexibility in their schedules. Weekend students traditionally still hold full-time employment and travel to Richmond on Friday evenings before classes begin, and then they leave immediately following the conclusion of classes on Saturday afternoons. Therefore, the researcher concluded the Day students would be an ideal group to target. Unfortunately, with the communication challenges that existed between the researcher and the seminary, the researcher was unable to access the Day students before the conclusion of their spring semester.

With the program implementation shifting to the non-traditional hours' female students, there was also a need to shift the delivery approach. When the researcher conducted her initial session with the current seminary students, she conducted an informal survey to determine what would be the most effective delivery method. The researcher quickly discovered that it would be unrealistic to conduct sessions with the students over the span of several weeks before or after class sessions. This became evident even in the attempt to conduct the focus sessions. As a result of work schedules, traffic, and family demands, women were arriving at different times for the focus session that was scheduled

before the start of the Friday evening class sessions. The women were coming into the session in waves – one group arriving at the designated times and the other groups of women arriving at other sporadic times of the one-hour session. Although the women were excited about the prospect of participation in the project, finding the ideal time to facilitate the sessions was challenging.

Given the numerous and challenging implementation issues, the researcher decided to use an unconventional approach – online implementation. Although relationship building and networking are vital components to the success of this model, the researcher determined this was the best approach because of the time constraints for the project's completion. The researcher assessed the focus group's willingness to participate in online sessions with the understanding that the sessions would be delivered in person the following academic year. The current seminarians were excited and agreed 100% to participate in the future implementation. Several Day traditional-hour students also attended this session and, together with the non-traditional hours students, assisted the researcher in brainstorming strategies for future implementation. The following suggestions were made: include a gender-specific session during the annual seminary John Malcus Ellison Miles Jones Convocation; conduct one session per semester for non-traditional hour students on Saturday afternoon following classes; and conduct sessions for Day hour students within their lunch hour, during the week.

It was the original intent of the researcher to conduct interviews with fifteen African American female pastors/ministry leaders. Unfortunately, after several phone calls and emails, there was a low response to confirm potential participants' willingness to participate. The researcher even attempted to send the interview questions by email. Despite the limited participation, she was able to obtain valuable information from the women who did respond.

This project assisted the researcher in restoring her passion for developing leaders, specifically women clergy. Although seminary taught the researcher to appreciate her gifts, she still struggled to embrace and celebrate her gender with respect to her calling. During the last couple of years of research and project implementation, the researcher found renewed energy and understanding of how God uses exactly how God made her to provide ministry and leadership in the local church. The researcher now appreciates more fully the beautiful complexity of being a female clergy and the unique perspective that women bring to ministry. As the researcher allowed herself to be open and receptive to this season of new awareness and discovery, simultaneously God began to open doors and provide increased opportunity to preach and teach to women locally and across the county. Although the project has concluded, the work will continue. The researcher plans to continue to work with the seminary to provide additional gender-specific learning opportunities for their female students.

APPENDIX A

WOMEN IN MINISTRY QUESTIONNAIRE

WOMEN IN MINISTRY QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____
Street Address _____
City, State Zip Code _____
Phone number _____
Email _____
Facebook Profile Name _____
Twitter Profile Name _____

What is your age?

18-22

23-27

28-32

33-40

Educational Background (please check highest level achieved):

High School

Bachelor's Degree (Area of focus: _____)

Master's Degree (Area of focus: _____)

Doctoral Degree (Area of focus: _____)

Denominational Background

Baptist

AME

AME Zion

COGIC

United Methodist

Non-Denominational

Other _____

Do you have your ministerial license?

Yes

No

Have you been ordained?

Yes

No

I consider the church I attend to be located in the following area:

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

I currently serve in the following within my ministerial context:

- Pastor
- Assistant Pastor
- Full Time Paid Ministerial Staff
- Volunteer Ministerial Staff
- Not serving in a ministerial role at this time

Which statement best describes your formal ministerial training and professional development?
(Check all that apply)

- Church/Pastor facilitated ministerial training program
(How long was the program? _____)
- Seminary training
- No formal training

What is your current professional support system in ministry? (Please check all that apply)

- Senior Pastor
- Assistant/Executive Pastor
- Associate Ministers in your present context
- Associate Ministers outside of your context

I have access to the following: (check all that apply)

- Internet access
- Video-Skype accessible desktop computer
- Video-Skype accessible laptop
- Video-Skype accessible cell phone
- Regular laptop
- Regular desktop

Are you willing to participate in a six-session Female Clergy Leadership Development research project for Pastor LaKeisha Cook's doctoral project?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW EMAIL

INTERVIEW EMAIL

Good afternoon,

My name is LaKeisha Cook and I am currently a student at United Theological Seminary, completing my studies toward a Doctorate of Ministry degree. I am contacting you to invite you to participate in part of my research. This project is seeking to address the problem of African American female seminary students at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University who graduate with a Master of Divinity Degree, but do not pursue professional leadership ministry opportunities within the local church.

As part of my research, I am conducting interviews with African American female leaders within the local church to gain more information about their own development and journey in ministry. It should only take about twenty-five to thirty minutes to complete.

I know that your schedule is busy, so if it will work better for me to simply send the interview questions over to you by email instead of meeting face to face, please let me know. I really appreciate all of your time and help. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours in Christ,

LaKeisha C. Cook, MEd, MDiv

APPENDIX C
CLERGY INTERVIEWS

CLERGY INTERVIEW

This project addresses the problem of African American female seminary students at the Samuel Dewitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University who graduate, but do not pursue professional leadership ministry opportunities within the local church. The researcher hypothesizes that based on the transformational leadership model, students would take advantage of the program provided, which will substantially increase their self-efficacy.

The researcher will utilize the qualitative research method along with pre-surveys and post-surveys, seminars, and sermons offered to members of the focus groups. In order to establish credibility for the research, the content for the seminar series will be based upon the data gathered during interviews of African American female leaders within the local church.

1. Provide a brief description of your education and professional background. (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)
2. Please provide the names of the two most influential leaders to your ministerial journey.
3. Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally? Please discuss your seminary experience from the perspective of being a female student.
4. What were the classes that you found to be the most helpful from seminary?
5. What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your seminary journey that assisted you as you moved into full-time ministry?
6. What are some things that you didn't learn in seminary that would have been proven to be useful?
7. Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?

**Developing a Leadership Development Model for African American Female Seminary Students
for Ministry in the Local Church**
CLERGY INTERVIEW
Pastor Kimberly Ridley

1. **Provide a brief description of your education and professional background.** (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)

Portsmouth VA native; matriculated through the Portsmouth Public School System; went to Hampton University (Bachelor's in Accounting; planned to originally work in the business field and get an MBA; recruited to job in Philadelphia for two years at a bank doing auditing work; job opportunity in Richmond at bank which caused her to move to the area doing risk management, auditing; rededicated life to Christ and was re-baptized while in Philadelphia after being baptized at a young age; when she arrived in Richmond, went to St Paul's with a friend; sat in the back at first but started moving closer – praised danced, played saxophone, sang with choir, small group leader; accepted calling at St Paul's and Dr. Watson confirmed her call – he told her he knew she was coming; “let her know she wasn't crazy”; when dealing with call, she began to be challenged by her feelings of inadequacy but found encouragement from boyfriend (who is now her husband); Minister's in Training program for a year at St Paul's; initial sermon on Sept 9, 2000 and started seminary on Sept 15, 2000 during the NTH program – graduated in 2004; continued to work and traveled for work while in school; took time off to have her son; was a Tax Manager at City Hall and “God literally called her off her job”; the year she graduated from seminary, she started for one of the non profit opportunities at the church while also working with the youth – Children/Youth Pastor ages 0 to 18 for two years – first opportunity in full time ministry; worked with the Young Adults 20-35 for two years – newly created position where she was able to create ministry opportunity for them; one year of general ministry work as an associate pastor of a staff of five; “When someone has invested in you, be sure to keep your integrity”; for 17 years, she was a part of the ministry of St Paul's, five years working in full time in ministry and they sent her away with a financial blessing to assist in the new plant; started church in September 2010; one worship service 10:30 am; Bible Study on Wednesday at 6:15 pm with a meal and 7:00 pm; Children's Church on second and fourth week at Hermitage High School on Hungary Springs Rd.

2. **Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally?**

Yes; from the perspective of relationships and group dynamics; teaching students to work in groups; going to seminary gives credibility to your ministry; group work even when challenging as a good introduction of what sometimes happens in ministry; discipline learned is good; time management; classes were thought provoking and making one open to possibilities of theology; you are on your own as a woman - as women we have to grapple more for relationships whereas brothers leave together as a group inviting each other for preaching engagements; networking doesn't always come naturally).

3. **What more can be done on the seminary level to assist women?**

Provide information the pastoral process – possible class on pastoral preparation; looking at other seminary models; survey women about their needs; buddy system; networking; CPU type workshops specifically related to women in ministry; workshops on resume development; navigating the job market; how do you find out about job opportunities; quarterly/yearly forum do's and don'ts of ministry.

Developing a Leadership Development Model for African American Female Seminary Students for Ministry in the Local Church

CLERGY INTERVIEW

Reverend Monique Williams

1. **Provide a brief description of your education and professional background. (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)**

Howard University Grad with a degree in Business; Master of Divinity Grad from Duke University; currently working on a Doctorate in Education in Organizational Leadership focus in faith based organization from Creighton University; Ministry experience includes serving as hospital chaplain intern, ministerial intern at United Methodist church, ministerial intern at faith based urban ministry New Song Urban Ministries, served as an associate minister at Union Baptist Church in Durham, NC and Imani Community Church in Phoenix AZ; currently serving as an associate minister at Canaan Baptist Church in Mesa, AZ; served as an educational coordinator and long time care facility; currently assistant program manager for faith based group home community.

2. **Please provide the names of the two most influential leaders to your ministerial journey.** Dr. Ruben Lee Monmouth – childhood pastor; founded church that she grew up in and family still attends. He passed away in 1995. He was a physician and a pastor. He showed her the importance of being in the word and staying in the word in living and preaching. Bishop Vashti McKenzie – for the place of ministry she has achieved and her supportive husband; global influence while still being a woman; “all woman and all preacher”
3. **Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally?**

Yes and No. Yes, in terms of understanding theologies that were different than hers. When you don't go to seminary, you are not afforded the opportunity to hear of someone's belief or school of thought that is not filtered. It is presented as a fact of the matter with nothing extra. (i.e., Gnosticisim). Learning theology. No; not helpful in pastoral preparation. At Duke, you didn't have to take hospital/hospice classes. Most female clergy tried chaplaincy. Male colleagues focused more on preaching. Didn't help people understand the practical. Didn't know it would be so lonely. She knew pastors that would pray outside the isolation room. They would not get gowned up and go into the rooms.

4. **Please discuss your seminary experience from the perspective of being a female student.** You learn how to defend you and your call. You learn when not to have that battle. At first, she didn't know how to explain her calling but her confidence was built through the interactions.
5. **What were the classes that you found to be the most helpful from seminary?**

Any class on pastoral ministry – elective courses; anything that talked about practical things like stewardship, counseling, stewardship. Class on the work of the Holy Spirit – taking the ritual out of religion and learning about where to find God in our ritual; where to allow God to move...in a wedding, at what point in the Holy Spirit invoked? Encourage those we are marrying to use that in their ceremony. When is it appropriate to have an altar call at a funeral?

6. **What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your seminary journey that assisted you as you moved into full-time ministry?**
7. **What are some things that you didn't learn in seminary that would have been proven to be useful?**
8. **Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?**

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I don't believe a majority of denominations are open to women in leadership. As much as they might embrace you, to have you in leadership is different. Push back comes from men and women. I have heard women say "I support you as a preacher, but not a pastor." Leadership is still seen as male oriented. Staff positions are easier. Evangelism, missions, pastoral counseling are open to women – sometimes youth. We have to be a lot more entrepreneurial about ministry. We have to figure out if we are going to start a church or a non-profit. I have to create a way or I won't get to a place where God has called me to be. Trying to get continual mentoring wasn't available. Not sitting and waiting for someone to give you a role.

Developing a Leadership Development Model for African American Female Seminary Students for Ministry in the Local Church

CLERGY INTERVIEW

Pastor LaTonya Agard

1. **Provide a brief description of your education and professional background. (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)** I

I attended an accelerated academic program in High School that was highly selective and sought to steer students toward academic and leadership success in post-secondary education. During my undergraduate career at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, AL, I majored in Chemistry and minored in English, intending at the time to pursue a career in medicine. After receiving my BS degree, I continued my education at the University to pursue a Master of Arts degree in English, as this was my true passion at the time. After receiving this degree, I received a three-year renewal appointment as an Instructor of English at Barton College, in Wilson, NC. Near the end of my second appointment, I was promoted to the position of Assistant Professor of English. I accepted my call to ministry in 2003, was licensed in 2005 at Malaby's Crossroads Missionary Baptist Church in Knightdale, NC, and was ordained by the Wake Missionary Baptist Association in 2008. As a member of the pastoral staff at Malaby's Crossroads, I served the youth, Christian Education, drama, Praise and Worship, outreach, and pastoral care ministries. As a result of my call and my desire to prepare myself for fulltime ministry, I began my seminary study at Shaw University Divinity School (2005) and left Barton College in 2006 to enter Duke Divinity School as a fulltime student in 2006. I graduated Cum Laude from Duke Divinity School in 2008. After graduation, I served part-time as the Pastor of Congregational Care for the Bailey United Methodist Charge in Bailey, NC. Due to family and financial reasons, I left that position in 2009 to serve in a fulltime capacity as a Case Manager at Catholic Charities for the Support Circle Program for Homeless Families in Raleigh, NC. I accepted the call to pastor Bazzel Creek Missionary Baptist Church in April 2011.

2. **Please provide the names of the two most influential leaders to your ministerial journey.**

- Revered James S. Utley, Pastor, Malaby's Crossroads MBC
- Reverend Dr. Linda W. Bryan, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Women's Baptist Home and Foreign Mission

3. **Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally? Please discuss your seminary experience from the perspective of being a female student.**

I found my seminary experience to be helpful and lacking in many ways. As a female student at Shaw and Duke Divinity Schools, I received an excellent academic foundation regarding Christian doctrine, biblical studies, and preaching. Both of these institutions were generally open to the inclusion of women in ministry, so there was not an obvious gender bias. However, there were classes that seemed more widely popular among male rather than female students. Most male students gravitated to the preaching courses while female students were more interested in courses that dealt with congregational/pastoral care and the nurturing of congregants. This meant that there seemed to be an implicit message that the males would go on to be "preaching leaders"

of congregations while women would move into ministry roles that were more nurturing and , therefore, less significant (at least this was the perception among African American students, especially those of us who are in the Baptist church tradition). While I took only the minimum of preaching courses in seminary, I believe the courses I did take prepared me fairly well for many aspects of ministry. However, there are still areas where I feel particularly weak and ill-prepared: church finance and stewardship, long-range ministry planning, conflict resolution, and Christian counseling/guidance.

4. What were the classes that you found to be the most helpful from seminary?

- Christian Theology—great foundation for the core doctrines of the faith
- Christian Ethics—great course to discuss issues of race and gender in the post-modern church and world
- New Testament Greek—opened up the Bible in new way
- Black Intellectuals and Religion—insightful course on issues of race in the contemporary Church
- The Art of Dying—insightful course on issues of death and dying from a pastoral care perspective

5. What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your seminary journey that assisted you as you moved into full-time ministry?

- Trust God.

6. What are some things that you didn't learn in seminary that would have been proven to be useful?

- How to handle the pressure and loneliness of ministry as a female pastor.
- How to deal more efficiently with congregational conflict
- How to preserve family and personal boundaries

7. Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?

- Barriers to women in full-time ministry are varied:
 - Our Denominational Background—It is still odd for a female to be called to pastor an established church in the free/ independent/ congregational traditions. Many Christians still believe that pastoral leadership is reserved for men.
 - Lack of Camaraderie among Women in Ministry—I have experienced rejection and sabotage attempts from other women in ministry.
 - Lack of Mentorship for Women in Ministry
 - Lack of Advocacy for Women in Ministry—Particularly in the Baptist tradition, many pastors are considered for fulltime positions at the recommendation of seasoned, trusted pastors. Men are typically considered before women.

○ Congregational Expectations—

- Many congregations prefer a more masculine model of ministry, which tends to be “top-down” and “exclusive” which gives the illusion of greater control, spiritual depth, and leadership strength.
- Many congregations prefer a style of preaching that is more masculine in its delivery.
- Many congregations place a greater emphasis on pulpit ministry instead of a total ministry of wholeness and healing, which, in my experience, is more popular among female ministers. This puts female ministers at a disadvantage, when the only relevant question is: But can she *preach*? This is especially true when congregations are still stuck in a particular paradigm for “good preaching.”

Developing a Leadership Development Model for African American Female Seminary Students for Ministry in the Local Church

CLERGY INTERVIEW

Dr. Gloria Miller

1. **Provide a brief description of your education and professional background. (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)**

I received my bachelor from Trinity College and Master of Divinity from Howard Divinity School; both are in Washington, D.C. I am currently a doctoral candidate at Regent University in Virginia Beach. I am excepting to complete the work in 2013. I was licensed in ministry in 1985 and ordained in 1986 at St. Paul Baptist church in Capitol Height, Maryland.

2. **Please provide the names of the two most influential leaders to your ministerial journey.**

➤ Rev. Dr. Suzan Johnson-Cook

➤ Rev. Willie T. Barrow

3. **Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally? Please discuss your seminary experience from the perspective of being a female student.**

Yes, I found my seminary experience to be quite helpful in a practical sense, learning how to preach, counsel, and do every day ministry activities. The exposures to the current literature on a number of topics have served me well as I interact with other seminarians and people in ministry. My most rewarding experience in seminary was gaining a greater understanding of the old and New Testament from a scholarly perspective. I enjoyed my time at Howard because of the black experience. Gaining knowledge of the rich history of the black church and the black preacher has been very beneficial in helping me to under my roots. Especially when it comes to my study around female black preacher. Also, some of the persons I met in seminary we are still friends today.

4. **What were the classes that you found to be the most helpful from seminary?**

Beyond the Old and New Testament classes, I thoroughly enjoyed my field education classes, which helped me to understand ministry from the practical side. Black theology, studying Richard Cones, etc., Systemic theology, which was difficult but the rewards were great. Homiletic was awesome, the techniques, I learned I am still using today.

5. **What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your seminary journey that assisted you as you moved in full-time ministry?**

To be me and not try to be someone else because I am uniquely gifted by God and my gifts will make room for me. My favorite scripture in Prov. 3: 5-6. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, lean not to your own understanding and He will direct your paths."

6. **What are some things that you didn't learn in seminary that would have been proven to be useful?**

In seminary, we are taught a lot about the contemplated life; prayer, devotions, fasting, a little about solitude. These are all very much needed to enhance our spiritual life. What seminary did not

speak to for me, as to how does the minister take care of themselves as it relates to their emotional health. I think this is serious missing components in the development of the life of a minister.

7. **Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?**

I

believe most women do not move into full-time ministry after completing seminary because the opportunities are not there as they are for men. When you look at the big picture, there are not a lot of churches across the country that can afford full-time staff beyond the pastor. Churches that can afford full-time staff ministers, often are looking for male preachers because the senior pastor is often male and they are more comfortable working with a male. Women don't often have the same choices as the men.

Developing a Leadership Development Model for African American Female Seminary Students for Ministry in the Local Church

CLERGY INTERVIEW

Dr. Jasmin Sculark

1. **Provide a brief description of your education and professional background. (Please include date/place of licensing and ordination)**

I attended the Practical Bible School in Vestal New York, Washington Bible College, Lanham, Maryland, Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio and United Theo. Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. As you can see, not only have I moved around in regards to city and state, but in regards to denomination. Each of the schools I attended was a different denomination which provided me with several different perspectives of ministry and experience.

2. **Please provide the names of the two most influential leaders to your ministerial journey.** Dr. Charles E. Booth and Dr. Rita Twiggs

3. **Did you find your seminary experience to be helpful to you professionally? Please discuss your seminary experience from the perspective of being a female student.**

It did help me in my profession and I was never a female student, I was just a student that was a female. The only seminary that placed any restriction on me because of my gender was the Practical Bible College. I was not permitted to take any preaching or pastoral classes. This did not affect me because I was a member of a strong preaching church.

4. **What were the classes that you found to be the most helpful from seminary?**

Overall, all the classes were helpful. The seminary needed to add more practical classes like: chairing a church meeting, the IRS and the church, laws and rules for nonprofit organization, understanding church policy as well as By laws and Constitution.

5. **What was the most valuable lesson that you learned during your seminary journey that assisted you as you moved into full-time ministry?**

Biblical interpretation

6. **What are some things that you didn't learn in seminary that would have been proven to be useful?**

Everything I already listed under question number 4.

7. **Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?**

I did not know that a great number of women after completing seminary do not move into full time ministry. If that's the case I would say this may have to do with the local church and not the seminary. The local church is responsible for affirming and ordaining people into ministry. Several women belong to local churches that even today are not willing to affirm the calling of women.

APPENDIX D
SEMINARY STUDENT SURVEY

SEMINARY STUDENT SURVEY

The mission of the School of the Theology of Virginia Union University:

- To act as a catalyst for the critical and conscientious faith development of students.
- **To assist students in defining and developing the specifics of their service in ministry.**
- To provide a compassionate and nurturing context for substantive theological study.
- To serve as a facilitator of the church in defining and identifying worship in its broader aspects and in understanding its mission as it affects everyday life.

What year are you currently completing in your master's program?

- ☐ First
- ☐ Second
- ☐ Third

If you were asked to classify your reason for pursuing a Master of Divinity, which reason(s) would apply? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Preparation for future academic pursuits
- ☐ Preparation for professional/ministry opportunity
- ☐ Other

Are you currently working in a:

a) Paid part time ministry position? _____ Yes _____ No

b) Full time ministry position? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you think seminary will prepare you to enter into a professional ministry position?

_____ Yes

_____ No

What role do you anticipate your seminary education playing in the developing and defining of the specifics of your service in ministry?

What additional topics/classes do you believe would be the most helpful for you professionally?

Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?

APPENDIX E
SEMINARY ALUMNI SURVEY

SEMINARY ALUMNI SURVEY

The mission of the School of the Theology of Virginia Union University:

- To act as a catalyst for the critical and conscientious faith development of students.
- **To assist students in defining and developing the specifics of their service in ministry.**
- To provide a compassionate and nurturing context for substantive theological study.
- To serve as a facilitator of the church in defining and identifying worship in its broader aspects and in understanding its mission as it affects everyday life.

What is the level of your education? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Master of Divinity
- ☐ Master of _____
- ☐ Doctoral Degree – Program _____

How many years since you completed your Master of Divinity degree?

- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

If you were asked to classify your reason for pursuing a Master of Divinity, which reason(s) would apply? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Preparation for future academic pursuits
- ☐ Preparation for professional/ministry opportunity
- ☐ Other _____

Are you currently working in a:

a) Paid part time ministry position? _____ Yes _____ No

b) Full time ministry position? _____ Yes _____ No

Do you believe seminary prepared you to enter into a professional ministry position?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Please explain.

Which seminary classes were the most helpful in defining and developing the specifics of your service in ministry?

Please list the learning opportunities or exposures that would have been helpful in defining and developing the specifics of your service in ministry (i.e., pastoral candidacy process, ministerial resume development, etc.).

Why do you believe more women do not move into full time ministry after completing seminary?

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